

# 人類は衰退しました

4

田中ロミオ

イラスト／戸部淑

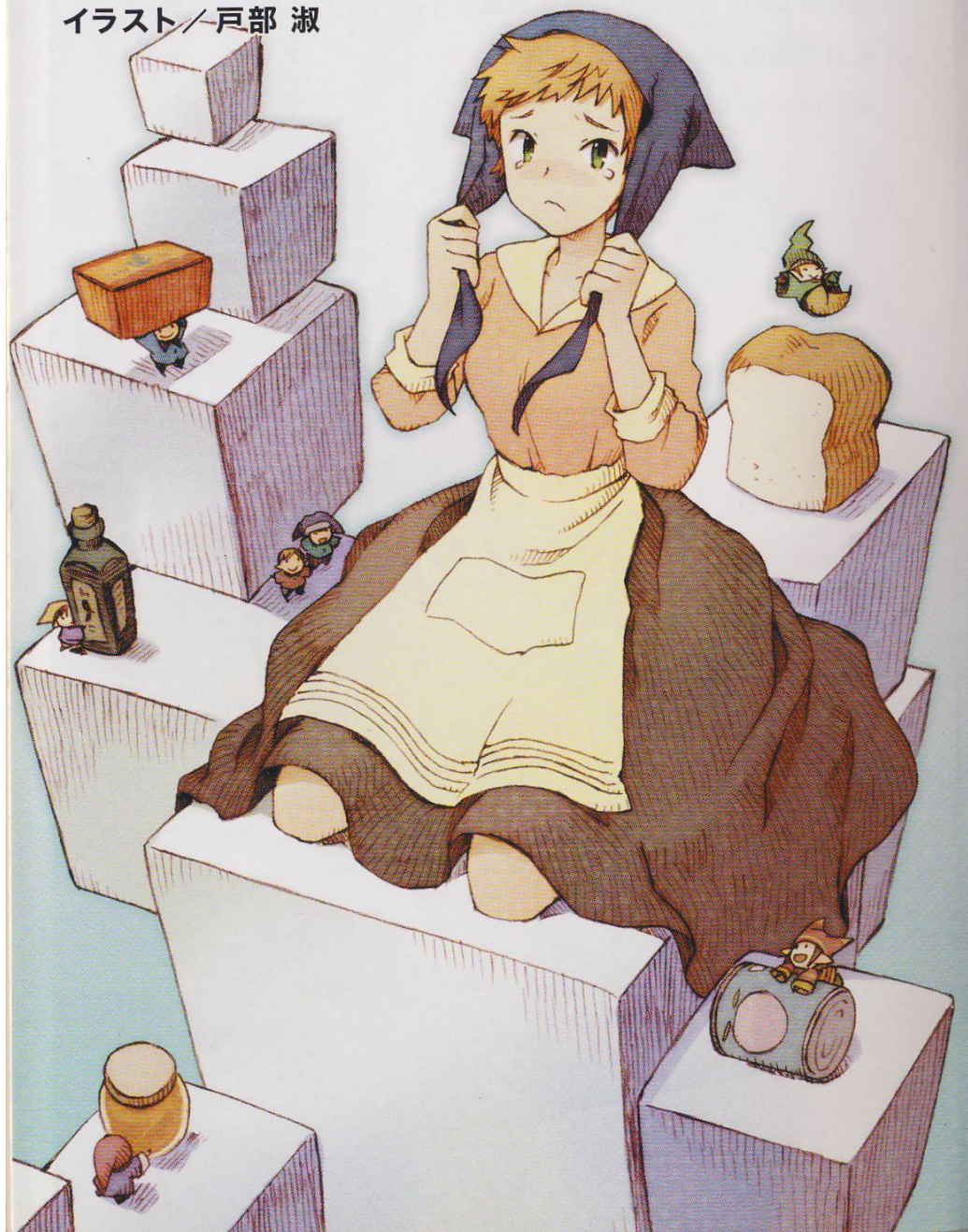




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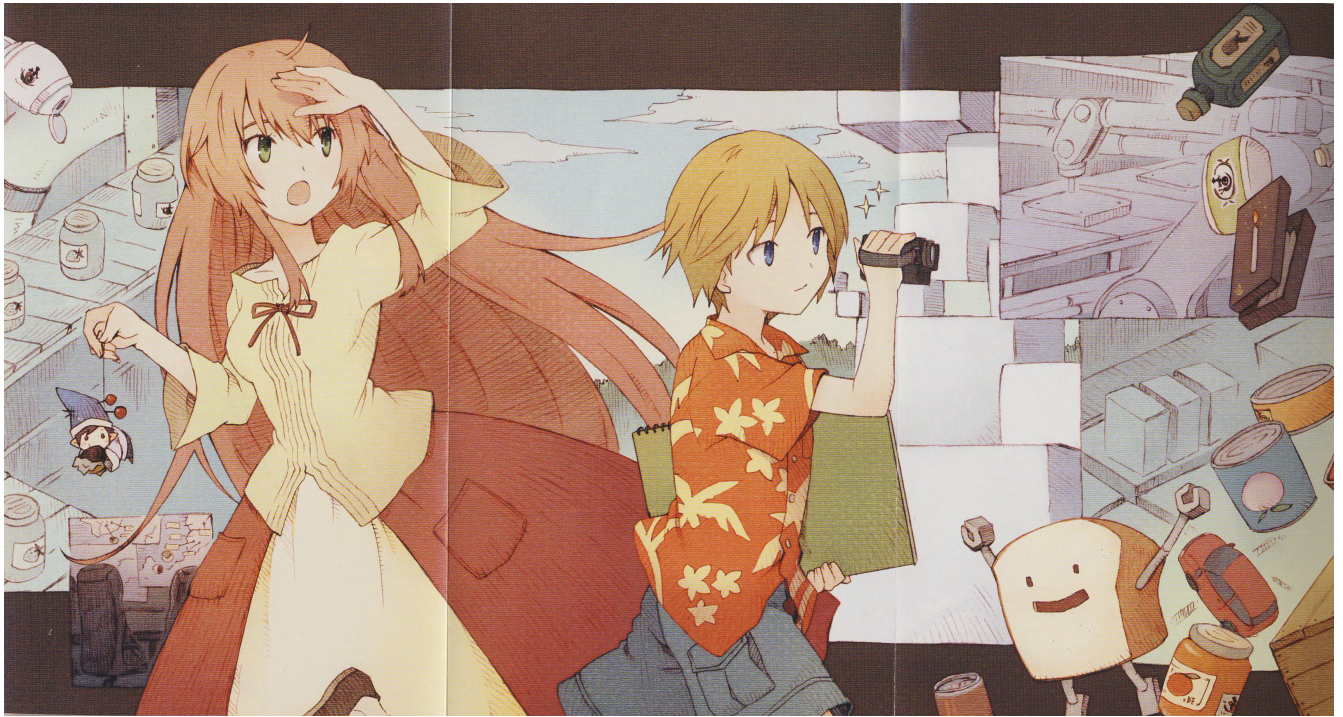
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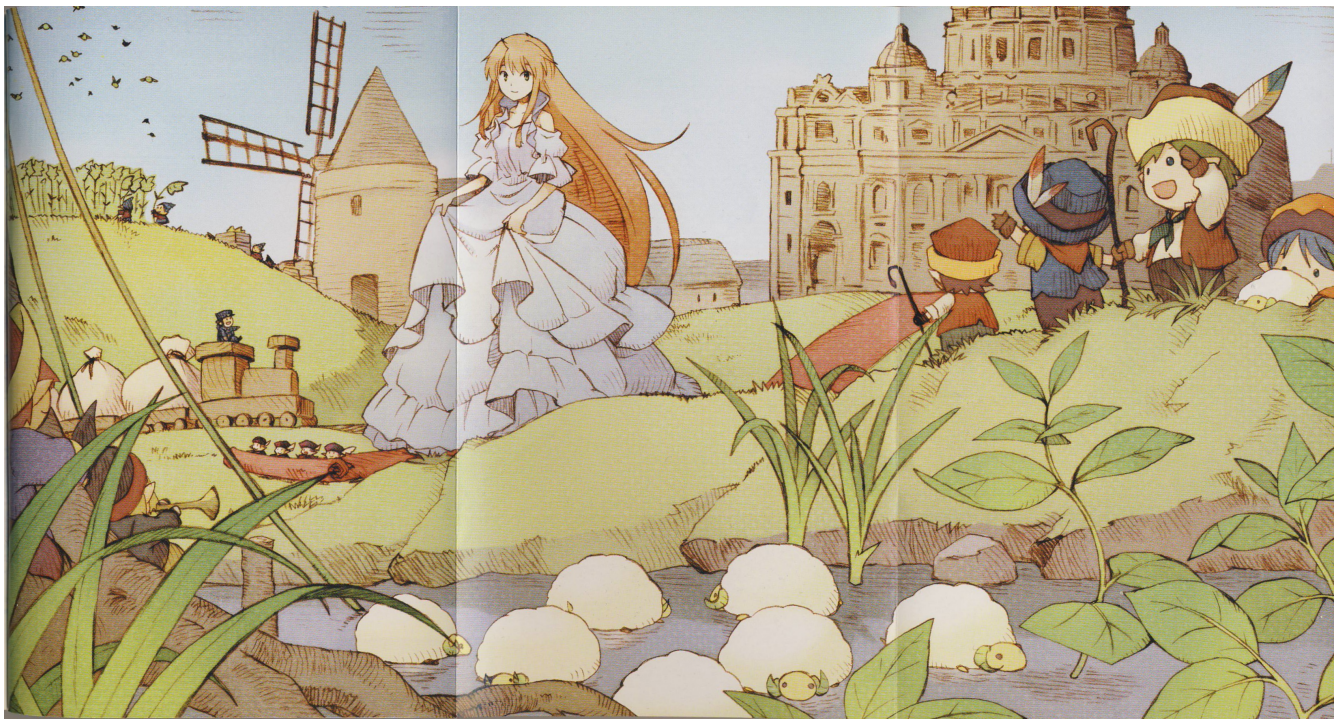


デザイン／一尾成臣









# 人類は衰退しました

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## MAIN CHARACTERS 主要キャラクター

Protagonist (Watashi, "I") Narrator of the story. Mediator of Kusunoki Village. Fairies at present, the people who count as humanity on this Earth. Grandfather Protagonist's grandfather. Boss of the Office of Mediation in Kusunoki Village.  
UNESCO Cultural Chief a smooth middle-aged gentlemen. Nickname VIP Boss.

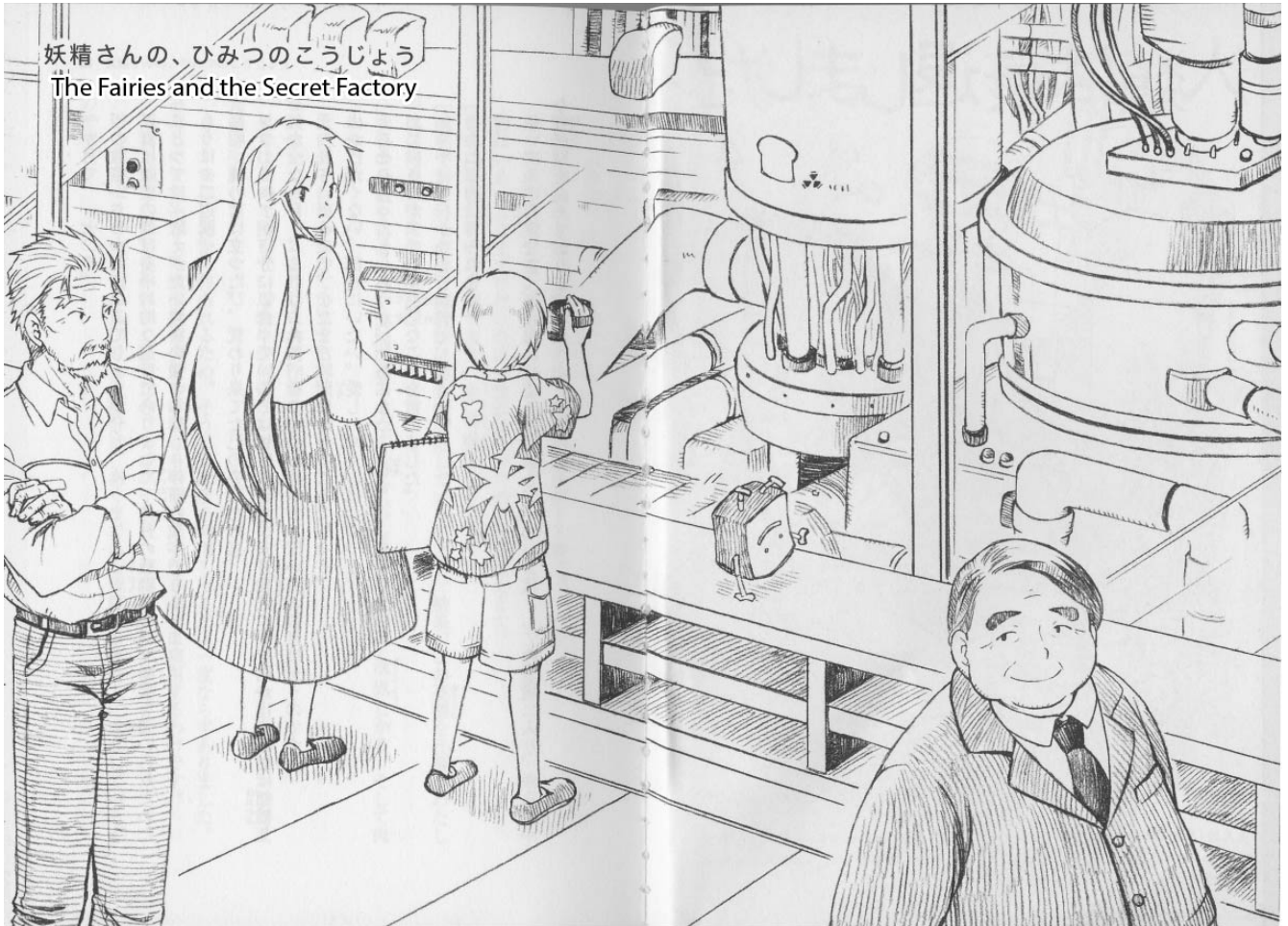


From the Back Cover

### **Humanity Has Declined 4**

Humanity has met with a gradual decline, and for some centuries now. Earth was now the property of the Fairies. Acting as intermediary between said fairies and humans were the international public servants known as Mediators, which was my job. The girls in the Village all call me sensei (so embarrassing). Odd products from Fairy Co. are making the rounds of the Village, and right around then I witnessed a running processed chicken, so together with Grandfather and Assistant-san we headed to the factory of this Fairy Co. to inspect it, but... give a country howdy to my business trip report on how, in a few months, Kusunoki Village, the Village of the Camphor Tree, had turned into the land most overcrowded with fairies.

妖精さんの、ひみつのこうじょう  
The Fairies and the Secret Factory





One month, one centimeter:

I believed it easy to tell what that proportion represented.

It was the average growth speed of the hair on the head, and for me, forced to cut off from the brouhaha of the previous month with the cutting of my hair, it was a miserably ugly figure that forced me to survive unbearable hours.

It had been two weeks already.

Every morning, whenever I stood in front of the mirror I sighed at my completely changed figure.

I did not think that short hair suited me in the slightest, and so those were days in which I worried about people's gazes and unfailingly wore a handkerchief on my head when going out. This being that, however, I did feel like my guise was like that of an old lady.

It was going to take a long, long time before it returned to its original length, indeed.

I did not want to go outside. I wanted to stay in my room. My beloved room. Forever.

"It's 'bout time you went to the job, right."

Grandfather came and said something merciless.

"...so I am indeed forced to go, then."

"Can't earn your meat if you don't go, can you."

Meat.

Even humanity, about which much had been said for a long time on Earth and vicinity, had at long last entered its stage of old age as a species, meeting with a period of slow decline.

Prosperity was a thing of the past, splendor was lost within the woods. Support for economic activity was over.

Consequently, at this point, meat was also counted among the products of value.

That being said, what was so bad about this was that this was thought to be a recent thing.

Indeed, the problem we had was, in short, a food shortage.

At present, Kusunoki Village, the Village of the Camphor Tree, has been suffering from an odd resource scarcity. As a result, this depressing job has befallen me.

"There's nothing you can do to earn your share of food except to help out with group work.

Doing farm work, catching fishes, and hunting for meat."

"Yes, that I do understand, everything else aside."

"You also go out to work together when it's time to make cream. This is the same."

In the village there were several dairy cows raised in common, so work was split among anyone wanting something, and they could make any sort of processed products.

As cream was made from cow milk, I had made use of that system no few times. And then I received a small amount of the deliverable product, and used it to make sweets and whatnot.

In the present, in which currency was not used, part-time jobs were of this sort.

As it happened, however, this leisurely distribution was entirely based on having a certain level of surplus.

If that surplus vanished, the farming families did not give out product. Having no product even with rationing tickets was, for a household that could not be self-sufficient as ours, a terrifying situation.

"Meat's an important food that has sustained the history of humanity," said Grandfather with faraway eyes. "And it's also an important food for our household."

Grandfather made eyes like he was aiming for a hunting prey.

"You just want to eat some, do you."

"Don't talk like it doesn't concern you. You too want some, right."

"That is, well, I do, a little bit."

"If you don't go you won't earn your share. And I have things to do. You just gotta go."  
"...indeed, that is how the story goes. Well, yes, I do understand. I will be going now."  
There was just the problem of the hair, so going outside made me a little melancholy.  
I lightly wound a plain navy blue handkerchief on my head, covering my short hair from the eyes of others.  
"I don't think you really need to hide it. In fact, it looks weird. Why're you covering it like that?"  
"I am sure that according to your standards of beauty this is nothing to be concerned about, Grandfather, right."  
"Anyone would think the same."  
"Children have a child's sensitivity. You seem to have completely forgotten that, Grandfather!"  
"....."  
I went and spoke nastily to him...

I left the house early in the morning.  
I walked the road that passed through the Village in the sunlight of early morning, which held no warmth, and before long the peculiar smell of livestock began mixing with the air. I advanced further and promptly saw my destination, a two-floored barn.  
That building, surrounded by darkened stone walls, was used as a chicken pen. That was where my community work was going to be carried out today.  
There were already around fifteen people gathered before the pen.  
"...oh dear."  
There was not a single male. The near totality was girls around the teenaged.  
Were this sewing or baking bread I would understand, but having only girls gather for rigorous manual labor was an odd thing.  
"Good morning... I came to assist, is this where I should be?"  
I tried asking the girl, pretty though her clothes were a patchwork of repairs, who was at the outmost edge of the group.  
"I think you're where you should be... this is a job where you can receive some meat, right?"  
It seemed I was in the right place.  
I said my thanks and stood there in wait.  
"Is that you, sensei?"  
Someone addressed me from behind. It was a voice I remembered hearing.  
"You are mistaking me for someone else."  
I thought I would be told off in many ways, like about my hair, so as my mood became heavier I came to say a lie.  
"But you are sensei, yes." "Really, you're sensei." "Sensei, it's us!"  
As I thought, they were acquaintances.  
Giving up, I turned around.  
"Good morning, everyone..."  
It was a group of three girls who always stayed together, had similar demeanors, had similar airs, and were dressed in similar manner, three young ladies with the fame of being there at any place where there was noise.  
"Come now, it's you, sensei! It's as I said, right?" "Good morning, sensei!" "So you are participating as well, sensei!"  
Yes, they called me sensei. It was embarrassing.  
Why?  
Because I was the granddaughter of a scholar. Because I had academic background (having



one way or another graduated from an institute of higher learning). Because I was older. Starting with the cream making, I had often been together with them when it came to group work.

The majority of people gathered by these jobs were housewives and young girls, so they became places of social intercourse.

Social gathering places of sole women were loud and merry to the point of death, and, of course, nothing I was good at.

Therefore, I rarely went to jobs beyond those related to making sweets, but these ladies seemingly walked around all day helping with all sorts of jobs.

Young girls at the very center of information nodes gave me a somewhat Victorian scent.

"Sensei! Lately we haven't seen you very much!" "We were really very worried!" "We wondered if you had been ill!"

"Ahhh, no, I had left for a bit of scholarly investigation... helping my Grandfather."

"Scholarly investigation!" "An adventure in the ancient world!" "Sensei and the Fountain of Knowledge!"

The three's voices, as one,

""""Amazing!""""

"...thank you."

It was actually nothing that good. Particularly given the penalties.

"By the way, sensei... there is one point about which we would really like to inquire."

There it came. I tried dodging the question.

"M-, more importantly, girls! Are you going to assist in this job?!"

Far into the realm of the power move, that dodging of the question was at a level such that it said I was not even reading the flow of the conversation in the slightest.

"Yes, so we are, sensei!" "They say they are going to share some meat!" "It's been a while since we've had some these days!"

Sooo high in spirits.

But it looked like I managed to dodge the thing, so it was all good.

"I did hear it was manual labor, but amazingly, it seems that it only gathered young ladies."

"That's because today we're on separate shared works... it seems that there was going to be a hunt," went Milady A.

"Seems the men have all gone to that or something," went Milady B.

"It seems that they are hunting wild boars!," went Milady C.

Incidentally, when taking the initials from their names, the three became ABC.

"Ahhh, I see... so Grandfather has gone to do that, definitely..."

A cooperative work where people were apportioned meat and the job of hunting wild boars: Grandfather would choose the more stimulating latter, no mistake.

Regardless, a hunt meant...

"...the food shortage has at last gotten serious, I see."

"That's for sure. Be nice if we had a magical table!," went A.

"Magical, right..."

It was not like I had no idea what she was talking about.

"Every day, when it's time for a meal, it automatically fills with food!" "My, that would be very amazing!" "With no need to spend effort making it, it's two birds with one stone!"

"...yes, sounds reeeally useful."

I absolutely could not leap into this maelstrom of elevated spirits.

However, the good part of this maelstrom was that even if I gave an uncouth reply, they did

not mind and continued with the same livelihood.

"Well, I think that they had to have been made by some unknown somebody off somewhere!" "I actually thought they were all canned foods, and that bothered me!" "Imagining that is kind of dreamy, isn't it!" "Maybe birds carry it in, how about?" "Amazing!" "Like in a fairy tale!" "I wonder if anybody will write a story like that!" "Let's send a letter to the publishers that are still working!" "Are there any still, I wonder?" "If we search for them we'll find some, I'm sure!" "But how are we going to search for them?" "Let's first search for a way to do that!" "Say, we could also write it ourselves, couldn't we?" "Wait a moment! That means someone has to draw the pictures that go with it?" "I'm good at illustrations!" "Me too!" "Well, so am I!" "This is a difficult problem!" "First we have to decide, fairly, who is in charge of pictures!" "Let's first decide on a way to do that first!"

The bad part of this maelstrom was that it was unstoppable.

I could do nothing but remain a spectator, that said, at that time, my awkwardness in not participating to the conversation had gone past the K-point.

With a difference of degree, the other girls were the same, and in the place there spread the somewhat warm and snug mood of a teatime. A mood of enjoying pleasantly chatting.

Only that patchwork girl had no one to talk to, and she stood there all alone.

Looking closely, I saw that she had quite the cutesy facial features. Her reddish hair had many split ends, and her freckles stood out just a little bit, but she had quite the raw material, I felt. The impression she left was that she just had the tiredness of living all over her, which stole the youth and the colorfulness from her.

"Ahhh, sorry I'm late."

Not long after that, a middle-aged man came out of the building.

The man should've been the head of a farming household, but for some reason he was armed.

Pointing his polished hunting rifle, he was wearing a belt packed with ammo like a sash. He was clad in mountaineering boots and trousers, and his sharp gaze shone from beneath the hunting hat worn over his eyes. At his belt dangled a canteen and a knife, and the rest of his luggage was packed in the rucksack he was shouldering.

What else to say, it was the perfect hunting costume.

Sort of felt like he was truly going to hunt wild boars or something...

"I know it's quick, but I gotta leave right after this. I'll leave the job to you all, so I hope you can all do it well."

Mutter mutter mutter... the maidens began making a commotion.

"I'll just ask this, is there anyone here with experience?"

The girls looked at each other's faces.

No one raised their hand. However, the man gave a long nod.

"OK."

Oh dear dear dear.

"Uhm, I do not have experience, but if I may ask a question."

The patchwork girl raised her hand.

"What is it?"

"What does today's job consist of?"

"...you came without knowing, then." The man scratched his head, looking awkward. "Well, if I told you people beforehand, no way this many people would've come."

For a moment the man looked at nowhere in particular and groaned, but eventually he made eyes of realization and said this.



"...it's a job anyone can do, provided they've been in a farming family."  
 Those words with a bizarre nuance to them gave me an acutely bad feeling about this.  
 "...girls, by the way, have you heard about what the job entails?"  
 I tried asking the trio at a low voice and,  
 ""No.""  
 I knew it...  
 I had also not heard about what the job entailed. Grandfather just told me to go.  
 I thought I would be vaguely assisting with the barn and other sundry jobs, but it appeared that the idea was naive.  
 Those who did not work did not eat. I see, perfectly logical.  
 The meat apportioned was chicken, or so the story went. In short it meant. In short.  
 "The lady hates this sort of job, you see. I'm going out, ain't got nothing else to do but rely on outside help. I've prepared a manual here. The gist of it is all written down, so read well and do it well. Just use the facilities 'round the main house as you please."  
 The man handed a piece of paper folded into squares to a girl nearby. The girl who received it was struck dumb. Us all, we could not follow this development, we were also struck dumb.  
 Then the man made a decisive declaration.  
 "The chickens in the closest room don't really make eggs anymore. You should just make them all into meat."  
*That'll be all, I guess*, the man concluded his speech, and then hurriedly departed. Likely to a fun very fun hunt for wild boars.  
 To express our feelings as we were left behind in one word,

"What?"

That was all.  
 YOU SHOULD MAKE THEM ALL INTO MEAT. You should make them all into meat. You should. What does he mean?  
 That it was better if we did? That it was fine if we did not?  
 That we could return home sit on the couch and indulge in potato chips?  
 "What do we do?" "What should we do?" "Are there no men?" "Now what should I be doing, I wonder?" "I want instructions!"  
 Confusion ran through the young girls.  
 "L-, let's first of all have a look at the barn..." went the unlucky lady who had been handed the memo.  
 We all looked inside the barn, and in the closest room we found around ten healthy chickens walking around. The expectable scene, given this was a chicken pen.  
 So what did we have to do in order to make 'meat' out of these? No, it was not impossible to understand. It was a simple thing. However, just in that instant, a gaping white space had opened in my consciousness.

**Well-living chickens → blank space for answer [                      ] → juicy chicken meat (it's delicious!)**

What was the process that went in the middle?  
 It had to have been written in that memo that had been left behind.  
 "Excuse me... could you try reading the memo?," went fearfully I.

"That's right, let's do that!" "That man did say it was a simple job, right!" "W-, we will just have to activate a machine, press a button, and everything will go right, it has to be that simple!"  
"I get it, let's try having a look... but let's all look together."  
The memo was solemnly opened in the interior of the circle we made.  
The first line went like this.

### **Step 1 \*\*\*\* the chicken**

The memo was quickly closed. The place fell dead silent. It was like a funeral.  
Whose funeral?  
Surely, it was the chickens'—

First things first, we were done with leading the chickens out in the garden.  
Even with things at this stage, we still held the groundless wish that some capable man might undertake the work in our stead.

The necessary preparations were advancing in parallel.

Some were boiling water. Some were checking branches for hanging. Some were choosing the blade they were going to use.

All present without exception felt their nerve vanishing, so everyone was spending prolonged efforts on irrelevant work. Their state of mind was such that they wanted to distance themselves from the crux of the problem. I was also vacantly dazing about, being that I was assigned the decisive task of transforming these cutesy Living Chickens into untalking chicken meat.

I took a broom in hand and pointlessly swept out the area.

Busy. Look as busy as possible. Move your hands with full body and mind concentration, so that you will not be made to undertake other work.

Behind my back, at last, all the preparations had been made, and it looked like it was being decided who was going to undertake Step 1.

"I don't want to!," shouted someone.

"I also don't want to!," screamed out someone else.

"You know we keep a sparrow as pet at home?! It's absolutely impossible for me to do this!"

The young ladies pointlessly pushed the Bird Knife (we had a blade made for disassembling chickens) at each other as they called themselves out. I understood those feelings to the point it hurt.

"My, it seems that the thing has reached me." "To do 'that' to a chicken, truly." "It's all right. Something will get done."

Eventually the knife was baton-passed to the Milady Trio. That was a relief. The three were very active, maybe they will undertake this just like that? But as it happened, Milady C continued with her word and blurted out this.

"After all, we have sensei, don't we?"

The thing got dumped in my laAAAAAAAAP?!

"Sensei! Please, sensei, use your scholarly knowledge to save us!"

"Eh, no, that would be... eh, what?"

At some point I was made to hold the knife.

The girls besides the trio made prayerlike faces as they implored me.

"If you please!" "Sensei! Please let me call you sensei!" "Sensei!" "You are our esteemed sensei!" "Sensei is going to go do this!" "Ahhh, thank you, sensei!" "We cannot possibly not

hold in high esteem the one who is capable of doing the necessary brutality!" "Sensei, you are the Reverse Doolittle, indeed!" "Please save us, sensei!" "I beg you, lead the way!"

"Hyh-, hyyyh...!"

A chicken with cutesy eyes was carried right before me.

Do it? Do it now? To this living being?

"Sensei. According to this memo, after first hanging the chicken, you need to strike it in the head to make it faint, then do '*that*' to its neck. You have received the support of information, so if you could please carry it out."

The girl who had gotten the memo seemed to have taken up the post of memo reader. Sigh, how nice that role would be...

The necessary brutality.

Humans were a life that stood above other lives. Even now, in their decline, that had not changed. What would the fairies think if they saw us like this, I wondered.

Everybody gave me gazes of expectations. Not a mood where flight or refusal would be permitted, this, it was the perfect situation in which I could only do it.

It was just, it was not like there was not one single ally whatsoever.

That was the chicken itself.

The chicken, acting so cutesy, the instant he saw the shine of the blade in my hand,

"C'CLUUUUUUCK?!"

It screamed out and struggled with full strength.

One of them struggling out promptly infected the other chickens.

"Eeek!"

The girl who was holding it was kicked off hard in the cheek and the bridge of the nose and the chest, and then it beautifully escaped in midair, running away as fast as it could.

"The chicken escaped!" "Catch it!" "There's fences, it's all right!"

As it happened, the chicken, chased to the wall, faced the fence and resolutely flapped its wings.

"Look! It flew!"

Someone shouted that. That was how high it jumped. One could awaken to hidden powers when faced with fire. However, it was just a little short, it could not reach the top of the fence.

The effectiveness of its flapping its wings declined, and it descended from on high. So there was nothing for it to do. The moment it seemed the chicken would be done for, it twisted itself and, using the basics of triangular jumping, kicked hard off of a tree trunk and ended up past the fence.

"Ahhh, it got out!"

It had run away.

Seeing the first one successfully fly, the others followed one after another.

There had all the footholds they could want. Rotten trees. The barn. The head of a girl who was standing there bolt upright as a board. Using all those as springboards, one after another they flew to their freedom.

"Hyyh!" "That huuurts!" "Nasty, it kicked me in the head!" "I got pecked on my hand!"





The barn lot promptly filled with the screams of maidens.

"Let's catch them!"

Everybody rushed outside of the fence. However, in about ten minutes they all returned with empty hands.

"What do we do now... they ran away." "We'll get scolded." "That was an accident. There was nothing we could do." "Seeing a blade and running away, really, they were pretty intelligent."

"They were precious sources of nourishment, though..."

The girls had made a big mistake. That said, I, alone, felt relieved.

"Say, sensei... with all this, what do we do about the meat?"

The patchwork girl talked to me.

"This is as you can see. In exchange for the right of chicken to live, humans will go with an empty stomach."

"Sigh... no good things again."

All that seeped out of them was hard effort, this situation was quite to sigh about.

"Uhm, was there anything that I was lacking in?"

"Ah, no, that's not it," the patchwork girl hastily waved her hands. "Silly me, I just have this habit of of searching for things that are No Good."

"Searching for things that are no good?"

"In your everyday life, there are many things that are no good, right? I'm just good at finding those."

That was much too pessimistic.

"Does that pessimistic lifestyle not make you want to suddenly turn towards Heaven and soar upwards? From atop a power pylon, for example."

"I have to feed my brothers and sisters, I don't have the time for that. Awww, not having time for that is a No Good Thing."

"You definitely... should stop living that way... I believe that."

"It's a habit."

Being too high in spirits may have been its own thing, but being much too negative was a problem as well, indeed.

And because of all that, our great big blunder was known all throughout the Village by sundown.

Just letting the chicken livestock escape meant a good scolding, but the men's group renouncing their duties and indulging in hunting wild boars while knowing this might happen was also questioned, the two things canceled each other, and as a result, this was all shelved.

I suppose it was a good thing that the wild boar hunting team had also caught no prey.

At the very least it was a temporary thing, as eventually measures would need to be contrived to catch the escaped chickens.

That being that, what was left after the question of responsibility was cleared from people, people that would have needed to be subjected to no such thing had they been experienced in engaging in all that, was the sense of empty stomach.

"Tonight too bread and vegetable soup, then."

"Isn't that just fine. Really."

"I wanna eat meat. I can't get strength from meals like these."

"What we don't have we don't have. We have our hands on some eggs so we are able to endure with those as far as animal proteins."

"I wanna complain about that enduring."

"You can say that, but what would you do if a big flock of quails were to just fall from the sky."

"That's quite the convenient phrasing, isn't it. I'd of course instantly have them."

"...would you now."

I could mostly withstand having multiple days in a row of meals without meat, Grandfather not tasting meat could be said to be just desserts, and I could say there were no particular problems. The dinner table had become a teensy bit more desolate, that was the sole and insubstantial displeasure I had about that.

It was just that the negative consequences bounced around and at times manifested in sad ways.

"So I see, there's none I see."

"Sorry."

In my private time at night, on top of my table, the new humanity / fairies that had come from outside the window all as one hung their heads.

The fairies—

They possessed supranormal technological skills that could not be imagined from their cutesy exteriors, gathered in larger numbers the more fun there was to be had, and the more they gathered the more they manifested terrifying possibilities, they were the humanity of present Earth... that was what fairies were.

To say it, they were the type of superhumans who were imagined in many varieties in science-fiction stories and the like, but they were also extraordinarily carefree beings, and things such as departing for space, developing their technology to extremes, or assisting mankind were grand ambitions that could not be expected from them, and as their greatest enjoyment was being spoiled by us by giving them sweets, they were the not very intellectual type of intelligent life forms.

And, since I was a Mediator for the UN, I acted as a go-between the fairies and the humans, to say it I fulfilled the specialized role of cushioning. The majority of the job consisted of giving handmade sweets to the visiting fairies, however.

Moreover, the harmful effect of a chronic lack of resources meant that it had become hard to get my hands on ingredients for sweets. I was not sure if this counted as dereliction of duty.

"The Village is at present lacking in resources. I am sorry."

Hearing those words, the fairies quickly went into conference mode.

"So you have no resources!" "What are resources?" "Lots and lots of various things?" "What will happen without resources?" "You starve and die!" "Is that a novel way to die?" "Might be nice to be a little different from the others!" "Originality, it's got it!" "It might come soon!"

The way they always reached a conclusion that was off-course, with their erroneous suppositions being at a supertechnological level of unreasonableness, always unfolded with this great tumult.

"Seems that what isn't there isn't!" "Gotta bear it?" "Yup!" "Gotta be strong in bearing things?"

"That might also be a source of pride!" "Master human might also acknowledge that of us!" "If they acknowledge that, they might give us sweets!" "For now, we gotta bear it until tomorrow?"

"No, tomorrow too I believe there will be none, maybe..."

"Seriously?" "Then the day after tomorrow?" "The day after that?" "The day after even that?"

"Weel, it might not be at that level..."

"Our swee~t, swee~t reward, when will it come?"

The fairies were much too impatient.

"Maybe?"

After all, this was a food shortage problem, it was what may have been called a longstanding enemy that stood side by side with humanity's prosperity, and even assuming the UN or the like comes to assist, it could have been said to have been solved quickly if it only took half a year.

They could not quite understand my words, to call it.

I spread on the desk the bead-like gum, as I had split it small to be fairy-sized. It was a simple sweet, I kneaded some hard flour with hot water, and it kept at room temperature. Flavoring was honey and jam.

"...we don't need gum for between-meal snacks!"

"We can't swallow it!" "It juuust doesn't reach the level of food!" "This won't even do for a side dish to actual food!" "We'd lose the wrapping paper while still chewing!" "We'd lose it, we'd lose it!" "We'd easily lose it!"

The fairies, who accepted whatever kind of sweet, same as I felt something different about gum alone.

"But I can no longer make anything in adequate volume except for gum."

"Are these the last days of the decline of material civilization?"

"Us humans have long since plunged into our final days of decline. We will be extinct soon."

"Whaat!" "Live for longer!" "Don't give up!" "We should just be together forever, ain't we!"

Awww, so cute.

A box separated into square cubicles, one like a gem collector would use, had been left over, and I set it down before the fairies.

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I did not really tell them to enter it, however they on their own took one cubicle each and fit in. Like cats, who entered inside boxes by conditioned reflex. There were exactly twelve cubicles that were all filled in, and my Fairy Collection Box was complete.

Better, they stopped still with eyes bright and wide open to be more easily admired by humans. Maybe they were sleeping?

"Separated into individual rooms means you will not multiply off on your own, so... it might be convenient for preservation."

The leftover tiny drops of gum I chucked all together into my mouth.

The honey and jam were far too sparse in taste, when I bit into the material they lost to an off-flavor. It was bad. This was not something I could give to guests.

I had to supply some proper ingredients for sweets as fast as I could, was what I decided as I went to sleep, but when the night dawned, the box was completely empty.

Several days later, the rumor that odd products were making the rounds of the Village reached the Office of Mediation that I worked at.

As far the pattern of conduct for fairies went, they heard my words, interpreted them broadly



and cherished them, that was how it went. Which all meant that the matter at hand and the conversation that we had exchanged on my desk several days before had a truly suspicious relation, however it was altogether too obvious that the odd products originated before that. It could be said to have been plainly obvious.

"Sigh. Fairy Co., is that it?"

A transparent bottle had been taken to the office.

It was a container for pickles, however what stood out was the place of production printed on the label... the logo of a company that came down to Fairy Co. The design was the silhouette of a person cheerfully riding a snail.

"No need to even think about it, that is what this is about."

On Grandfather's desk there were the collected products from the same maker neatly arranged. The majority was foodstuff, a bottle of carbonated water, cheese wrapping paper, a can with large beans cooked in curry sauce, a large box of potatoes without sprouts, a parcel of fine powdered juice, and plenty more.

"How did these things manage to get into circulation?"

"Seems that at some point they just appeared on display on the shelves of house-shops that handle miscellaneous goods and the like."

"...that MO is... of course..."

"These couldn't exactly be exchanged with rationing tickets, so they were seemingly at wit's end as to how to handle them."

"That being said, how come these all happen to be empty?"

"Seems they were really tasty. Products with high customer satisfaction, right."

No solutions without sacrifices indeed, yes indeed.

"I see there is nothing with meat."

"Might be that they don't kill."

"That is odd. Where did they manage to supply the other foodstuff from?"

Given this was the doing of fairies, it was however thinkable they produced it out of something like magic.

"Can't imagine they're stealing from people. Might be necessary to investigate this."

"Indeed so, well, who are we going to get to investigate this?"

"...sigh."

It was very obviously my job.

Since there were functionally no subordinates we could easily dump this on, see.

Which all led to me having to suppress my feelings of not wanting to be seen by people and dropping by the square at the center of the Village.

The Salvation Army caravan merchant corps had just gotten it, and it had opened up a little bit of a bazaar. There were also people there who jumped to the situation and exchanged the leftover materials, so it was quite bustling.

A bazaar, generally speaking, gathered older ladies.

"My, it's you!" "What happened to you that did *that*?" "Oh no, look at you!" "What a terrible thing!" "It really doesn't suit you!" "They were better long, yes, the hair!" "Wearing a scarf makes you look older!" "If you had to make them short, you needed to have cut them more and dyed them purple, and sport a firm and sparkling trouser look! If you did you would look just like a model!" "Short hair and a long skirt is just unrefined!" "That's just not an urban look!" "Just not fashionable!"

Just being a little different from normal meant I was sharply caught and attacked in group.

Why did older ladies have no delicacy, I wondered. I expected them to have been shy young maidens in the distant past. Or, perhaps, when one's DPs (Delicacy Points) fell to 0 a woman fell to the disease of being an older lady, I wondered. How many DPs did I have left?

I snugly fit in the one-person gap between house and house and sat cross-legged for a little less than an hour, depressed, when a figure like a sapling spilling sunlight through their curly forelocks stood before me.

"Heh heh... small spaces suit being depressed, understand...?"

"....."

The figure... the boy who served as Assistant in the office of Mediation normally had a face scarce in expressions, but it now swayed with a faint perplexity.

He was the sole survivor of a family who lived in a faraway land, and after being put into custody he received Grandfather's guardianship, living a life of assisting with Mediation, reading, and writing.

His standpoint was that of Assistant to Grandfather, but that being said, recently I was having him devotedly assisting me.

Assistant-san having come meant I could not allow myself to stay leisurely depressed.

"You are holding quite a lot there, I see."

He was holding all sorts of items in his arms. I thought they were toys, but found that there were bottles and tin cans, all with Fairy Co. logos, some visible and some hidden.

"Ahhh, you heard from Grandfather, right? Did you get them at the bazaar?"

The boy nodded. He graciously went around the square and collected evidence.

"Thank you very much for your work. Then I suppose we should have a look."

I inspected the items gathered there. The majority was foodstuff. Stew, sauce, spaghetti, fruits, oiled sardines, ham, bacon, mashed potatoes, vegetables. They may have all been canned, but there was a variety of menu items. It was the abundance of a flawless consumption-type civilization, which had now been lost.

"What did you exchange all these for? Rationing tickets?"

"....."

"What? They just gave them to you? They were left over, and you could have as many as you wanted?"

Even without words, once used to it, the boy's thoughts were more or less understandable.

"....."

"No matter how many they use, the moment their eyes left the shelves they replenished? I see, that is as I heard."

As I investigated further, I saw that there were a few daily necessities such as soap and candles among them.

Surprisingly enough, there were also some sort of medicines. Disinfectant, anti-pruritus medicine, eyewash, ointments. Conversely, as far as what was not there, there were no sort of sweets whatsoever.

"...so there is fish and meat. Killing... would fairies kill?"

Just after experiencing that event, I could not imagine that treatment being given to cows or pigs.

Assistant-san offered me a board-shaped can opener.

"We should try checking the contents a little, that is true."

First the fruit can.

"Ah, it is so sweet... delicious..."

When I felt the plum melted in syrup on my teeth I sighed. I consumed one whole can before I

could blink. I drank down the juice without leaving anything behind.

Next, the fairly heavy and flat canned oil sardines.

"Ohhh, these too..."

The sardines were slick with oil, shining like precious stones. I pinched one up with my fingers and tasted it as it was.

"Delicious! But...?"

Forget the backbone, there was not even the sensation of the tiniest bones. To say it strictly, as a food it felt like a paste molded in the shape of fish. That said, the flavor was precisely that of oiled sardines.

Assistant-san opened the can of ham. I promptly tasted it.

"Ah, this too is sort of wrong. This is not real ham."

The flavor was precisely that of ham. That said, there was a sensation on the tongue that was different from that of the real thing.

So what if this was, as thinkable, some fused food patterned with flavor and shape by some means?

"...Assistant-san, could you bring some of the cans still with food in them to Grandfather? I think it best we investigate whether these foods are safe or not, just in case."

"... (bow)"

After Assistant-san had left holding several tin cans, I tried casually searching around the remaining products and discovered something incredible.

"B-, but this is...?"

### **Fairy Co. Hair Growth Formula ~A Cambrian Explosion For Your Hair~**

I then discovered this line among the caution labels, you see! (in the style of reminiscing.)

**\* Recommended for those who have lost hair in a game and want to regrow it quickly**

"This-, this is...!!!"

It was altogether too perfect.

I was so happy that my consciousness felt far away.

And then – my memories at that point vanished.

When I next woke up, I was on my bed.

"Was I so excited that my memories just flew away...?"

It was pitch black beyond the window.

"It has become night!"

On my drawer chest there was the hair growth formula, already used.

"I used it without even noticing it?!"

Whatever else, my head felt itchy.

The circulation of blood in my scalp had accelerated.

"Is that the effect?!"

That was perhaps much too rash an act, if I said so myself, but as it was an unconscious urge I could have done nothing to prevent it.

"...so when I get too excited this is what happens... I must pay attention."

I felt like I was missing something, like I had skipped a part of my life.

"Let us sleep."

Sleepiness seduced me in its warm embrace in a few minutes.

Early morning after one night.

"Mh... all right."

I slept soundly and could welcome an invigorating morning.

When I faced the mirror to brush, I found that the length of my hair had returned to normal.

It had returned to its whole length, perfectly so.

"....."

Way too effective.

#### ■ Notification of meeting

□ Name of meeting First Kusunoki Village Meat Consumption Plan Meeting

□ Date \*\*/\*\* 2PM onwards

□ Location Kusunoki Village Cultural Center General Meeting Room (2F)

□ Subject Recovery of the chickens escaped into the wild during the meat production collective work a few days ago

□ Participant limit Thirty

□ To participate The people involved should be sure to attend, please

...to speak from the results, the conference was a majestic waste of time.

To convey that act of boundless stupidity to the posterity, I will discuss it a little.

Because of this legendary waste of time, held one floor below the third floor Mediation office, we came to make waste of nine hours of time.

Even if it was a mere nine hours, how much more that was when multiplied by thirty people?

Were we in an age where economics were still alive, the case of thirty involved people losing nine hours sequestered in a single place, what a cost that had, indeed. The conference itself proceeded in a rambling manner, and before I knew it we had incurred a great loss, it was like an invisible monster.

The opinion that came shortly after the conference had begun, in the most basic sense, was that everyone should split up and search a wide area.

This view may as well be called a lack of any measures, and the result was that it was quickly suppressed via cooler opposite opinions.

As it happened, no matter how we discussed, no alternative plan came up.

When we had approached the third hour, we hit a point where no one stated anything new at all. As there were no further discussion, everybody probably thought that they were going to go home early.

In order to carry out a lively discussion, we adopted that compulsory discussion system where each participant in order had to make a proposal while the remaining others made comments about it. It was not good. It was extremely bad.

There was nothing easier in the act of discussion than complaining about someone's opinion.

And then the one complained about came to be mentally depressed, and we could do nothing but concede our lack of insight.

We lost our tempers.

The fervor that had returned to the conference room was spent on criticism, censure, and judgment.

The sixth hour came.

What we had gained after the hours of frenzy had passed were the weariness from fatigue and the pain in the throat from shouting too much, as well as a gulf between human relationships that did not seem possible to mend.



At times, the opinions that came out were like we had just thought of them, and they were subjected to opposition (in a mere six hours of conference we had built up a political antagonism that included the complexity of mutual complementation) that cut dully through them in businesslike and mechanical manners, which accumulated underfoot like squished rotten fruits and emitted a really bad smell.

The air became extremely stagnant.

Two more sterile hours passed, and by the time ten PM came by, not a single person there had managed to preserve their nerves.

By the time everybody started feeling their limits, Grandfather came to see how things were.

"Shouldn't you just all split up and search wide areas?"

That carefree opinion that did not feel like he had any vested interest in this was immediately accepted. We were ready to collapse.

The conclusion I gained from that precious experience I will now express as the title of a business document that would sell well.

**There is no need for meetings! ~The decision was already made before discussion~**

"Anything?" "Nothing at all. You?" "Nothing here either."

The whispered voices of girls could be heard from here and there in the woods, in the gap between the trees and in the middle of thickets.

The search for the chickens had begun.

As the number of people who thought they should not lay hands on the suspicious products of Fairy Co. was comparatively large, there was still food value in the spent chickens (meaning ones that did not lay many eggs anymore. They generally were made into edible meat).

"Sensei, how did it go?"

For the patchwork girl, who seemed to have a particularly young family, this might have been a problem of life and death. She was always very serious.

"...sad to say that I have no clues."

Today was the third day since the search had begun.

We expanded the ring of search little by little with the Village as its center, and we had reached all the way into the woods, but the speed of the escaping chickens was seemingly even faster. If we did not at least catch one, our position in the Village would only become more difficult.

"For being livestock they have fairly strong legs. Though normally, reared chickens shouldn't be moving around much. Why did it have to happen just with us, I wonder. ...awww, another No Good thing."

"These chickens had to have awakened to a hidden power, indeed."

That being said, as time passed we had to find some that had been killed and eaten by wild animals.

"There's also the no good possibility that they have already been eaten."

"But there are no foxes nor weasels."

"Dogs there are. Cats too. Cats are impressive, they even hunt for sport."

"...at the very least, our hunting skills seem less mature than a dog's or a cat's."

As leaden rainy clouds followed us above our heads, the ABC Girls came running gasping and panting.

"Sensei, we found one! One of them!" "It was just casually pecking at the ground!" "Better, it had a face that said *natural grown earthworms're delish, I ain't eating feed no more!*"

"Mnh, how impudent! We should chase it right away!"

There was the sound of many feet.

The maidens chased in a hurry. After one hour of running about, in the end we we were unable to secure it.

"...it's gonna be three hours soon." "I'm tired..." "They adapted so quickly to wild life in these few days, those guys." "Ahhh, I gotta go back home and make ready for lunch." "Me too, today I'm in charge of baking bread... so annoying." "I wanna go home and knit something." The maidens were extremely exhausted and bent over. At this point they were impossible for our hands to catch, that was what that state spoke of.

"Sensei, eating meat is really a problem," went A.

"So the meat we normally eat without a second thought was filtered through by these many labors, I see."

"I'm starting to not like meat so much," went B.

"I wish meat was shaped like trees to begin with," this was C's statement.

"Truly, this is an event that nearly makes even me feel like that... reality is not lenient, indeed. This is regrettable, but we should give up the hunt and recompense the farmer in some other way – what?"

A thicket shook, and a tiny figure walked before us.

"What is this thing?"

It was bizarre.

It had a peculiar figure with no eyes nor nose nor mouth, it stood on two legs, and had visible, pallid goosebumps.

At first, I thought it was a species of reptile.

But it was something I had seen somewhere... right, that was precisely like–

"That's chicken!"

"That's right, it's chicken meat that has already been processed, isn't it!" "Meaning it's a chicken with its neck cut and feathers plucked?!" "And why is it here?" "Did someone catch it and process it?" "No way!"

Exactly, no way.

It was an instant in which the reality of meat processing was overwhelmed by a joke-like unreality.

"If we bring this back, we should be able to redeem our dishonor a little bit, right?"

That's true, so true... the girls made grabby hands as they approached the processed chicken. However, unreality was not lenient. The chicken felt the presence of predators, shook, and went into panic.

Though it could have just run away calmly, it struck straight into a nearby girl with prodigious jumping strength.

"Eeek!" It all too easily knocked down the girl. "That hurt! And I felt it directly, I felt its skin directlyyy!"

Thump, and everybody started feeling afraid, this I could tell. The girls by now had made a habit of losing.

"Don't lose heart! If we all go for it at once it'll be all right!"

"...it ran away."

This time we had exhausted the last of our strengths, and we sat down under the soft early afternoon sun filtering through the woods like some forgotten monument.

In addition to the failure of having the chicken escape, I had more trouble.

The impression that everyone in the Village will have of the Office of Mediation will certainly become one of unreliability.

"Uhhmm, all here gathered, please listen. There is an urgent communication from the Office of Mediation."

As a noble and proper civil servant, this I had to do in this situation.

"We ought to conceal this from the people of the Village."

Suppress the truth—

"The one who caused this is entirely unclear, so we do not know what sort of injuries might come, and there is a possibility this will cause undue panic."

Manipulate impressions—

"Listen here, you should also keep this a secret from your families, right? That would be information breach, and it might incur heavy fines (← lie), so I would like you to please be careful, all right."

Menacingly lead—

After the girls had all nodded,

**"Yes, sensei!"**

The rumor of the Legend of the Running Chicken Meat had spread through the village before the day was out.

"That ABC Broadcast Office, really!"

"So, what's this all about?"

I was immediately questioned.

"...I must apologize."

I summarized and spoke of the event and,

"...a matter that requires dealing with, that."

"I completely agree, as a matter of fact."

No, I did not mean to skip out on dealing with the matter. I did mean to act.

I just wanted to solve the matter without anyone knowing...

"So, the problematic meat chicken... it seems it's been witnessed running around a plain in the periphery. There's also someone who took photographs."

The several photographs laid on his desk were unmistakably of the walking chicken meat.

"In particular this part, can you see it?"

There was something like a black scorch mark around where the chicken's legs were attached.

"What is that? A scald?"

"...it's a branding mark."

"I see."

"Is the picture so tiny you can't tell? The shape of the branding mark, I mean."

As told I strained my eyes.

"...ah."

The silhouette of a person riding a snail.

My voice and Grandfather's were in unison.



""Fairy Co.""

The Fairy Co. factory was found walking down the remnants of an old city street until the slate fence began to collapse, up to the point where neither its shade nor its shape remained. In the basket Grandfather had there was a fairy that had gone down flat, and once he had confirmed that his head, like a compass, was pointing precisely at the factory, he lifted his gaze.

"Right, seems like this is Fairy Co. It was actually very close by."

Grandfather had taken off his usual white lab coat to reveal a khaki shirt and trousers, and had declared that looking quite cheerful.

"They built a factory like this when we were not looking..."

I did the diametrically opposite of Grandfather and whispered that weakly while out of breath, then craned my neck dripping with the heat of marching, trying to make my field of view cover the entirety of the building. However, I could not. That was because we were already next to the factory, and whatever else the size of the building itself was the largest thing that I had ever seen so far.

Were we close?

That expression was as a matter of fact not accurate.

In a forsaken plot of land filled with all sorts of ruins of buildings completely covered by grass, choosing a path even more aged than a fork in the road that had never been used, was where the place could be reached.

In that plot of land, which had nothing but a grass field, brand new walls soared, which appeared to have been simply carved out.

"This has been erected recently. How they cut out the stone... I've no idea. Unknown means."

The stone walls covered the tall factory whole, but the metal gate had been left open, and I could manage to look at the whole of the facility.

"Mh-hm, that's one modern-looking place."

"More than modern-looking, is it not avant-garde?"

"That's for sure."

The factory facility, standing just right there in the center of the plot, had a shape of countless white cubes of various sizes piled together, and reminded me of a construction of wooden blocks.

The way they were piled felt random, they did not have quite the feeling of stability of pyramid, and there were even some spots where the cubes were touching corner to corner and seemed to float in midair.



"Why'd they have to go out of their way to make a construction that looks so dangerous?"

"It sort of looks like the crystal structure of salt."

"That's an accurate way of putting it, yeah. Might be that the process of construction's also similar to crystallization."

It had no windows, forget a single smoking stack, it was a building made only of complicated cubes.

It was terrifyingly massive, and the highest places easily reached the height of a thirty floor building.

"Where's the entrance?"

"I suppose it is there."

Located close near the foot of the laboratory was an old wooden single storied small house.

"An old wooden building made by the hands of men, huh. Or maybe it was originally a building that had remained in the plot of land, who knows. Right, let's go give them a visit."

Today and from this moment we were to carry out an inspection of Fairy Co.

Participating members were me, Grandfather, and Assistant-san.

Assistant-san was holding a small video camera with the Fairy Co. logo. We were going to have a video recording of the inspection.

This video camera was produced with a design of the very final years, seemingly, as while it was small enough to fit in one hand, it had excellent performance, editing / browsing / shake compensation and more were basic functions, and it could even take stills.

There was one mystery, how every time it took a still it made the roaring explosive sound of a gunshot, which according to Grandfather was to "*prevent stealth photographs*".

Happily, however, Assistant-san was continuing to move the camera around, there was no being startled by the sounds of gunfire.

Also, there was a special guest that ought not be forgotten. We had one fairy who had been pretending to be a doll in my room also participating.

The fairy was wearing a white lab coat, which made me think he was one of Nakata's family.

The four fairies I had previously named have flourished (multiplied?) with that individuality, and right now I came to see their descendants (?), just one or two. It was also possible that this Nakata-san was that same Nakata-san from that time, however I had no means to make sure of that.

The lifespan of fairies was said to be short, so I would say it was a different individual. Well, we can discuss this some other time, still.

So, well, this Nakata fairy had of course nothing to do with the present events.

Even if he did he would have forgotten it, as he did not know about Fairy Co.

We just used him in the stead of a magnetic needle, and he had the job of indicating where his friends were working in large numbers, in other words he had been employed in the stead of a compass.

He was an untalkative boy.

He was particularly composed for being a member of the same species, he truly had few words, his core was firm and buried deep within itself, he was a mature person.

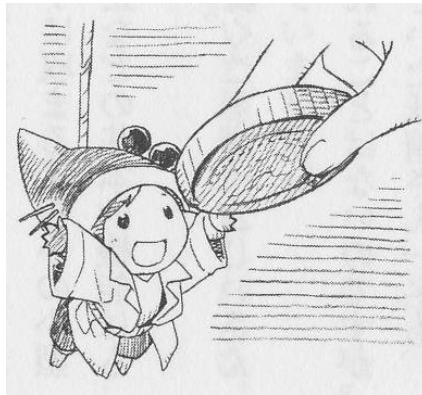
...but even with that said, he was of course a fairy, so he kept fainting and going incontinent every time he heard a loud noise.

The contract between him and Grandfather had him earn a pound every time he completed a job.

That said, the currency paid was in chocolate coins.

"Is the job done?"

The fairy said that while still dangling.  
"Yup, you helped. Ohhh, right, I should pay you your wages."  
"Yes!"  
He paid him the reward of one chocolate pound.



"Is this a bright golden yellow sweet?"  
"Literally so."  
"I love you too!"  
"Come, now that you've fulfilled your job, it's time to go, isn't it."

## ■ Entrance Hall

The knob of the wooden door affixed with a plate that said "Fairy Co. Front Reception" did not have one single fingerprint on it.

"This copper here is really shining, is it not."

"It's gotta get shined every day."

"They must be either extremely unbusy, that or the cleaning reaches even this. Whichever it is, every time visitors come the people in charge must clean the knob."

"Assistant-san, could you please open it?"

"..."

Assistant-san acted like a boy who was about to trample fresh snow, he contrived a way to grab it that left ten full fingerprints on it and opened the door.

The old building was of course also of old make inside. And still the cleaning reached this wooden floored lobby, which was superb, and gave off a warmth that made me feel relief.

There was a mahogany writing table set down in the stead of a counter, and there might even have been the possibility that it was of an age older than the building's. On the desk there was only a bell to let known that visitors had come, there was nothing else, there was not even a chair.

Grandfather rang the bell.

A clear echo permeated through to every corner of the tiny building, and ought have reached the ears of the owner.

"...does this not have quite the human feeling?"

"I think so too. It just don't feel like the fairies to have even one household item."

"But the building in the back is indeed fairy-like... what do you think, Nakata-san?"

"I don't think anything at all."

He was totally disillusioned.

We waited a while, but the receptionist did not appear.

Grandfather waited standing still, as if this were politeness, Assistant-san waited walking around, making his pencil run on his sketchbook, and Nakata-san only spun around while still dangling within the basket.

Eventually a door in the back opened, and a man in his late middle age of good physical build appeared to receive us.

"Sorry for the wait. Welcome to Fairy Co."

"Are you from here?"

"No, I'm only the receptionist. What is the nature of your business?"

"We are from the UN Office of Mediation. Truth is..."

Grandfather explained in simple ways the events that had transpired in the Village.

"...which all means, we were maybe thinking this sequence of events was the doing of the fairies, and... consequently we came to inspect the place."

"Understood, since our company is certainly called Fairy Co. It's not implausible."

The late-middle-aged man laughed.

"What I would like to ask is, is it this way?"

"At the very least, I have never seen a fairy. Ahhh, but I did several times in photographs."

"Well, that I see."

"This looks empty...?"

"Ah, huh?"

The contents of the basket had at some point emptied, and Nakata-san had disappeared.

The fairies appeared and disappeared at will.

When there were many humans in a place, this did happen.

"So you never seen any even inside the factory?"

"Exactly."

A short silence interjected through the conversation.

Either the middle-aged receptionist was lying or the fairies really had nothing to do with this, I could not tell which it was. The receptionist, smartly wearing a brown suit, seemed sincere, I did not see him as deceiving others for his own self-protection.

"I see, understood," and Grandfather changed the focus of his question. "And still, the workshop in the back, that's certainly something."

"That is true, when I first saw it I was shocked."

"You do not know how it came about."

"Correct, it was already in operation when I came."

"When did you come here?"

"Just recently."

"Which was when?"

The receptionist here made an awkward face for the first time.

"...three days ago. Seriously. I wanted to act as a receptionist now that I'm getting late in my years, that was all."

He seemed to be an older man with quite the playfulness still.

"Could I ask you to cooperate in some way? We didn't come here trying to close down the factory or anything."

"That is what I would hope for. After all, even this suit was provided by them, see. Just sticking here I get provided with food and clothes and tools. There is no job as easy as this."

To say which was which, understanding the true situation took priority, so we came to have

the receptionist show us the older documents the reception had to have.

## ■ Office

"I have never examined things in detail, either... this is everything."

We moved to the office and rustled through documents that did not even fill one cardboard box.

"There's just you alone here, right?"

"Exactly. It's lonely. There seems to have been someone previously, but once I came in it seems he moved up and was promoted."

"Where is that person?"

"At present it seems he is working in the factory."

"Mh-hm."

Grandfather's hands stopped as they were still moving even while talking.

"...a factory document made for externals, this one. Look."

"I see," and I peeked into what Grandfather had in his hands.

More than a document it was something of a company presentation, there were several sheets of color paper covered with a plastic film inside the paper folder, all put there without binding.

"Originally it was a company founded by volunteers. Looking at the dates, it was established two hundred years ago."

"What?"

"It was an era in which population had to have decreased, but economics was still just barely living on. Most importantly, science and engineering had to have mostly declined."

"It was originally a honey company, I see."

"They handled non-synthesized natural honey... in this age, we are at a level in which natural foodstuff with no pollution is no problem. It had to be thriving, I'm sure. It was an era in which the welfare system was thriving. More than lust for money, the appetite for honor had to be stronger. People were recognized by what job they were doing."

"They had beekeeping contracts in every corner of the country, gave honey value with the brand Fairy Co., and sold it, I see."

"Look, the logo is the same as the one from that age."

The mark of a fairy riding a snail was on the photographs of the era.

"It is not strange, then," I spread my arms and showed my doubts with my whole body. "Then, we celebrate two hundred years of this factory's founding, is that what this means?"

"Did you know that?" Our gazes shifted to the receptionist.

"I didn't. Sad to say, I learned this just now. I hadn't chanced upon that, you see. This is really a company with a history."

"Well, I believe that company got shut down quickly. There is no trace of the factory in the pictures of the era. I believe that was an addition made in recent times. It's said that the humanity of the past had revolutionary building technologies where they liquidified the building materials and controlled it. Perhaps they used that, or perhaps..."

"It is the fairies' usual thing."

"That said, we don't fully understand how humans were involved in all this."

"Well, the simplest explanation is that the fairies built the factory as a present to relieve the scarcity of supplies."

As thought, there was nothing but having the factory shown to us.



"So that's how it is, what do you think?"

The receptionist lifted his hands, acting resigned.

It seemed we could move inside the factory directly from the wooden building.

We had the receptionist lead us to the furthest rear of the building, and found that the sole and only door leading to the factory was made of iron and electrically controlled.

"I cannot take you for a tour through the whole of the factory, please understand that."

He slid in a card key and the thick iron door smoothly split left and right like it had no weight.

Beyond the door was a straight, excavated corridor.

The corridor was big enough that a railway train could run through it, and light turned on automatically.

We were at long last beginning our inspection.

"Please, this way."

The inspection troupe unhurriedly advanced.

## ■ Marmalade Factory

It turned out that the construction made of cubes that we could see from outside was each an individual separate factory.

They were each individually independent, but that said each factory was closely sequenced via pipelines and conveyors, and they all seemed to be either shipping complete products or exchanging raw materials.

"So it's an all automated factory."

"Exactly. It needs no human hand whatsoever."

"How do they ship or transport things via conveyor?"

"Well, that I don't know. I haven't seen it, either. I wonder how they do it?"

Given that whatever else, at some point they appeared on shelves, you see.

"This is the marmalade factory. I suppose this is the smallest facility we have."

We pushed open double-hinged doors and entered the first production facility.

As the receptionist said, it was no more than the size of a smallish cafeteria.

There was a large machine in the center of the room, and it was connected to pipes coming out of the wall and had a conveyor belt facing outside.

"That is the marmalade machine. It takes ingredients from the pipe, and after elaborating them inside, it carries them outside. It doesn't make much product. I did try it, and to say it, the flavor was... normal, I guess."

It was not particularly tasty, is what he was saying.

"Do the machines stop?" went Grandfather.

"When the ingredients run out or there is no need for production, it stops. It appears there are times when it just can't come by ingredients, you see. At those times, what it makes changes."

And as he was talking about all that, the pipeline vibrated and a dull sound reached us.

"The ingredients have just been carried in, it seems."

The machine began working right before our eyes, and before long bottles full of strawberry jam came out in sequence riding on the rollers.

"Elaboration is quite fast. In fact, is it not too fast...?"

"Yeah, that's gotta be why the flavor is so..." the receptionist held his tongue. "It is mass production. Comparing to things made slowly is wrong in the first place."

"So, this is a multipurpose production machine."

"All the facilities in the factory are like that. Would you like a taste?"

We all had a cracker with the just-made jam.

"...this is bad."

"Mhhh, the flavor of handmade one is dramatically better, indeed."

The receptionist made a face like he expected that and wiped the sweat on his face.

"W-, what does the young man think?"

"....."

"What? What did you say?"

"Assistant-san is saying 'passable'."

It had the image of a stamp with an image drawn by a small child.

"Oh my, he seems to be pleased by that."

"No, the education that Assistant-san has received (the directions from the lady doctor) he created three standards, 'excellent', 'good', and 'passable'. The policy was that he had to give praise, it seems."

"...in substance, 'passable' is a stigma, isn't it. If he had said he did not really like what he had eaten..." and at this point the receptionist suddenly sighed and came back to his senses. "So, how about we go have a look at the next factory? The other things are mostly better, too."

"Ah, one thing before that." I pointed at the machine. "Can we look at what is inside?"

"What is inside the machine? Sure, I do not mind."

The receptionist opened a part of the machine, a maintenance hatch, for us.

"Lessee..."

"Are they inside?," went Grandfather.

"...they are not."

We said our thanks and had the hatch closed.

"Was there something odd?"

"It would have been good if there had been, but there was not."

## ■ Bread Factory

"So, this is the bread factory."

"My, the facility suddenly became quite large."

We were guided to a location much bigger than that of before.

The space was larger than a castle's hall, and it felt filled to the brim with countless machines and pipes. The factory part was an airtight space, and the passage for inspection was obstructed.

That was why there was none of the good smell of bread being baked, either.

"This is the only equipment that can be inspected, right?"

"As I have it, in the past, the bread factory was visited by children."

I got it, or maybe I did not.

"The flavor itself is fine, I suppose. It would be tough if the jam was good and the bread was bad..."

"No, no, the bread is much better than that. Right... it should be aiming for a 'good'."

The receptionist put things bluntly.

"I believe the guide robot is about to explain how the bread is made."

"Welcome-chu!" The floor opened, and a crude robot that was a loaf of bread with just arms and legs attached made its introduction. "I'm Loaf-san-chu."

This was a character that seemed to be making a bit of fun of people.

"I know everything about how bread is made-chu."

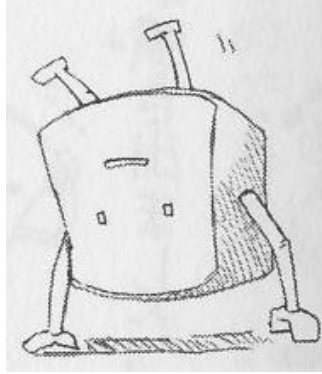
It linked its arms behind its back and said that sort of proudly.

"What is bread made of?"

I first of all tried to test its knowledge.

"A very good question-chu!" Loaf jumped up. "Bread is made of flour, bread is made of yeast, and salt-chu. Bread dough is fermented several times, it's flavored, and at last it's cooked browned and it's done-chu!"

Loaf playfully stood on its hands.



"By the way, these days, anything is fine as ingredient for bread-chu."

"Wait."

Ignoring Grandfather's interjection, the bread continued talking.

"There's many things that ferment, the important thing is that it has the flavor of bread, anything is fine-chu. Fermenting things and letting them rest many times takes time, too, and costs rise-chu. Synthetic bread is low cost and has good nutritional balance, it's truly the honor student of foods-chu."

"...in this place they have no problem making synthesized food even if there are no ingredients, I see."

"...so it appears."

Without caring whether we followed along or not, Loaf walked on its hands and continued its explanation.

"Well, to be frank, compared to real bread the flavor is a bit worse-chu."

He bravely burst out with hard to believe comments.

"Being able to synthesize it from leftover food has a long history, and it seems it has encountered lots of problems-chu."

Problems that were natural to have.

"But civilized people prefer safety to flavor-chu. This is also common sense-chu."

What salty civilization's sense of morals are those?

"Welll, synthesized bread, depending on how it's made can be supplied with a real production cost near zero, and it's been said many things about as refugee food or developing country food-chu."

Still standing on its hands, Loaf carefully moved towards a shelf on one side of the passage.

Then he pointed to a machine across a glass door with its large bean-like claws.

"That tank is the device for the removal of the toxic ingredient that disassembles ingredients, the one next to it is the preliminary processing tank-chu. The one opposite to it is the synthetic coloring device to give the bread an appropriate color-chu, and..."

And there we went with the synthesis and the coloring and the additives. The explanation that

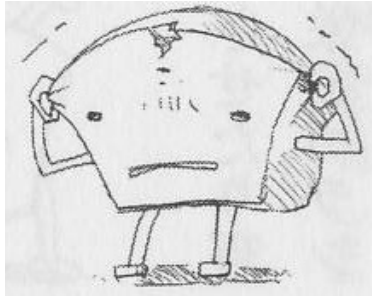
did not stimulate appetite continued on for long.

"...and well, that's about it-chu. As last, I'd like you to try tasting the bread-chu."

"Well, we do not quite have the appetite for it..."

"If you think Loaf is pitiful, then I'd like you to taste me-chu. G'bwah!"

Soon as he said it, Loaf tore apart its own body like an expander.



The edible bread split in two around its brain (?). From the cut, a tremendous volume of bodily fluids (?) spurted out.



"Eeek!"

"This... Loaf himself-chu... is freshly baked... bread-chu..."

It slumped over on its knees while spurring out a ceaseless volume of strongly viscous fluids, and that figure of its with its hands held upwards was pointlessly solemn.

"Why does bread have blood!"

"Truth was... Loaf... was not edible bread-chu... he was a carrot mix fruit juice bread... recommended for... little kids who won't eat them... chu"

Loaf fell over.

It bent into the red fruit juice pool it had shed itself, and its limbs twitched and spasmed.

No one was able to come out with words.

Unable to bear the silence, the receptionist said this.

"Uhm... please, have some."

The inspection team shook their heads at the exact same time.

""Pass.""

#### ■ Number Four Connecting Passage

The inspection team was walking down a wide corridor that connected factory with factory.  
 "Was there not some abnormality in the program that made that bread?"  
 "...you may ask me, but I'm new here, so I can't say."  
 "We have no way of investigating that either, however... are you acquainted with the bosses?"  
 "Who knows, I have never met them."  
 "What, never?"  
 "Never."  
 My feet reflexively stopped.  
 "When I came in, my predecessor was already a factory worker."  
 "Then how did you take over the job?"  
 "Everything was condensed into documents. And it isn't a particularly difficult job."  
 It really was not, was what I could not avoid thinking.  
 "...are there workers besides that predecessor?"  
 "If so, I have never seen them."  
 Ahhh, of course, that was the answer.  
 "Of course, not even the face of your bosses?"  
 "Naturally, I don't know them."  
 What we had here was nothing less than an odd story.  
 There were many possibilities that could be considered, but none were explanations that could be called coherent.  
 Suppose the owners were fairies.  
 For what reason did they intentionally employ people?  
 "Grandfather, as I thought, the matter is..."  
 Grandfather, who was walking in the back, not urged by anyone, so he would not miss whatever tiny discovery, was not there.  
 "Grandfather?"  
 Grandfather had suddenly disappeared.  
 "Huh? But he was walking right behind until a moment ago...?"  
 "Maybe he returned to the previous factory?"  
 "Might have. Might be that he is in the lavatory. If so he should come back quickly."  
 Even assuming it was so, going back without saying anything, well...  
 We waited around ten minutes, but Grandfather did not show up.  
 "I will go look a little. Could I have you wait here for a while?"  
 The receptionist ran for the bread factory.  
 With now just me and Assistant-san there, at last the fairy jutted out his head from my pocket.  
 "I apologize for not seeing you for so long."  
 "Fine, fine."  
 "I've heard that I get extremely tense when there's lots of humans."  
 "Say that like it is hearsay, but..."  
 When Assistant-san pointed the camera at him, the fairy hid again.  
 "...I wish they had made ready with some tea."  
 And then the receptionist did not come back, no matter how much time passed.

## ■ Non-operative Factory

"So, again with this pattern."  
 We wanted to go pick up the two latecomers, so we thought we would be coming back to the

bread factory.

But as it happened, we got lost.

We were standing in a different factory, one that was not operative, and clearly different from the ones we were in before.

"We got lost..."

I covered my face. I hated my rashness.

We ought not have moved so much from the place we were stranded in. That being said, that had as a premise that rescue was coming.

"So, just where are we now?"

I pointed my eyes at Assistant-san.

"....."

Assistant-san took his head away from the camera and gave me cutesy eyes.

"What? You were focused on shooting and you do not know?"

So I see...

How about a fairy compass.

"I have a request."

"Aye ayeee!"

I tied the fairy and dangled him... the direction his face was pointing was the location with a higher concentration of fairies.

"Spinny spin~!"

No good. He was only revolving chaotically.

"This is the center, so even a compass will not work correctly... mh-mh."

As I expected, there was nothing for us to do but walk around and escape this deadlock of our own strength.

"H-, how an annoyance..."

I did not have the willpower to have an adventure every single time.

"Fairy, multiply. Multiply on a large scale. And then disassemble that factory. I will reward you handsomely."

I tickled his sensitive body, and as he squirmed the fairy said this.

"Only if there's something fun."

"Fun things..."

I met my eyes with Assistant-san's. If there was something fun, they would naturally increase. That was what the fairies were about.

"Well then."

I spoke a joke I kept in reserve. It was my own work. Very well done. This will totally work.

"....."

The fairy's lack of expression... hurt my breast as hard as it could...

"When normally you make merry on the slightest of things..!"

It was better if I did not speak this joke in front of the other girls.

"..."

"What? You are going to do it, Assistant-san? Are you sure? Is this a joke? You must make people laugh, you know?"

Assistant-san put down the camera and opened out the sketchbook, at this point his trademark and which he had fully used several of.

It appears he was trying to entice him using the stories he had yet to show.



## Picture Book - The Seven Friends

The seven children of the village,

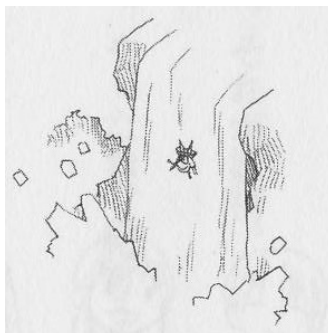
Aaron, Becky, Carl, Della, Edgar, Flora, Geoff,



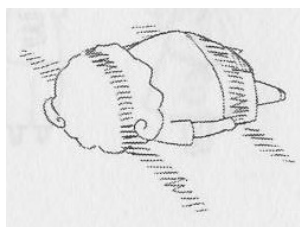
were very good friends.



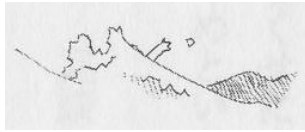
Aaron died of starvation in the woods.



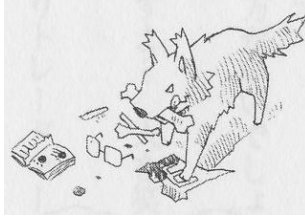
Becky fell headfirst down a waterfall.



Carl was run over by a horse carriage.



Della was carried away by the waves.



Edgar made a tasty lunch for a wild dog.



Flora was turned into many pieces.



Geoff was behind everything.

The end.

It came with illustrations of how each kid died.

I nearly fainted.

"Negative picture books are forbidden."

"..."

Assistant-san was sad.

"Why you, what are you doing showing skills in directions like these...?"

Every day was spent (at least by him) in cheerful fun, why was this darkness sprouting in his

heart?

"Was it the lady doctor? Did that doctor lady do it, did she abuse you until you feel like a psychopath? This is the path of Kubrick, or of Hitchcock..."

Assistant-san shook his head slowly. You are mistaken, milady.

"Just have a look. The fairy who read it became depressed."

"...dooown..."

Having read a dark tale, the fairy's sights hung as they wandered around.

"He is going to be totally useless for some time, now!"

"Things are dark, they make me want to think about life..."

"Awww, he hid in the pocket again... seriously."

The depressed fairy ended up hiding in a closed location.

With this, I could no longer settle things using force.

"Hey, come on... let us walk!"

In the end, this was another adventure.

### ■ Odd Group of Factories

By walking around the inside of the factory on our own, we came to continue, if without a plan, our original objective of inspection.

There were truly a variety of factories operating.

Foodstuff was the beginning, there were clothes, daily necessities, toys. Even electrical appliances.

More than a number of various things, it was a chaotic thing which could not be quite said to be coherent.

There were factories that silently produced things I did not understand the point of and that no one would need. For example, what was produced over there were tiny machines shaped like eggs.

"Now what are these things?"

As I was wondering that, one just assembled mystery egg mech fell down from the conveyor overhead.

"Wah!"

Watch out, falling materials!

I reflexively covered my head, but it was bounced off somewhere the moment it was about to hit me.

"...mh?"

I turned around and found Assistant-san with the camera in hand filming in no direction in particular.

He seemed to be concentrating, and whatever else I could think, he did not seem to be in a place where he could cover me.

"...well now?"

Now what was all that about.

The egg that had fallen to my feet had a top to bottom lid attached, and as I slowly flipped it open, I found it was like a dead fish.

I tried poking it with my fingernails.

And there it suddenly began playing a peaceful song, as well as dancing.

"Wah!, wah!, what is this all about, really...?"

The egg danced energetically at my feet.

It revolved and flipped around, it made quite the proficient dance, but... it promptly ran out of power, and stopped with all the charm of a fish unloaded from a ship.

"...that mecha sort of invites sadness, indeed."

Song and dance:

I was not aware as to what era that would have been popular in, but it was certainly an entertainment machine that would have been popular.

"Well, maybe with the charging dock..."

The charging device was being produced in addition to it.

I carefully put the egg with its power out on the dock, and then left the place behind.

This had to be for example a car factory, as we could see a place where atop complex confused conveyors there were countless components coming and combining.

This made for a really good picture, as Assistant-san did not even temporarily release his eyes from the video camera.

A thin metal board was subdivided finely, and turned into the shape of a part with a press machine.

Each part was connected by welding robots, giving shape to the car itself.

On a different line the engine was being cast.

The automatic line instantaneously carried out the polishing and combining.

It passed through several machines, and the engine was completed with pistons and a cam chain.

As last processes the engine was set inside the frame, tires and window glass were attached, and it was formally finished.

Cars were produced with maximum efficiency in the minimum time without any intervention of the hands of men.

This was the perfect figure of one of the automated workshops.

"Except they are miniature cars."

They were tremendously elaborate miniature cars.

"I suppose these would move if you put gasoline in them... but who would control them, I wonder. Even fairies could not ride them."

That was one type of waste, or maybe it should be called a luxury, indeed.

In one room, miniature models of the cube workshops were being rapidly assembled.

Size was about thirty cubic centimeters.

They were being packaged in good quality boxes with their peripherals and a manual.

"Let us see... the household portable factory 'Cubey' is crafted with the same design as the business use factory."

It appeared to be a factory machine for household use.

"Food, daily necessities, toys, writing equipment, leave it all to this machine. \* the self-multiplication functionality has been omitted from this product... I see."

There were also products that were convenient.

And with all that we continued our observation for half an hour, and we more or less were no longer surprised at seeing odd facilities. We were tired of them.

Maybe an exit, maybe a reunion with Grandfather and the receptionist whom we strayed from, maybe definite traces traces of an accident...

I came to feel that I wanted events of that sort.

"...seriously. What an unruly construction, this."

I came to complain.

How we still felt no danger was in how we could come into food and water anywhere.

Even right then I was wetting my throat with mineral water from a plastic bottle I had up and borrowed.

"I want to sit down and rest. Where is the break room, maybe there is none."

I set my elbows and leaned my weight on a handrail that divided the passage lengthwise. As it was an automated factory, I could not spot a chair anywhere.

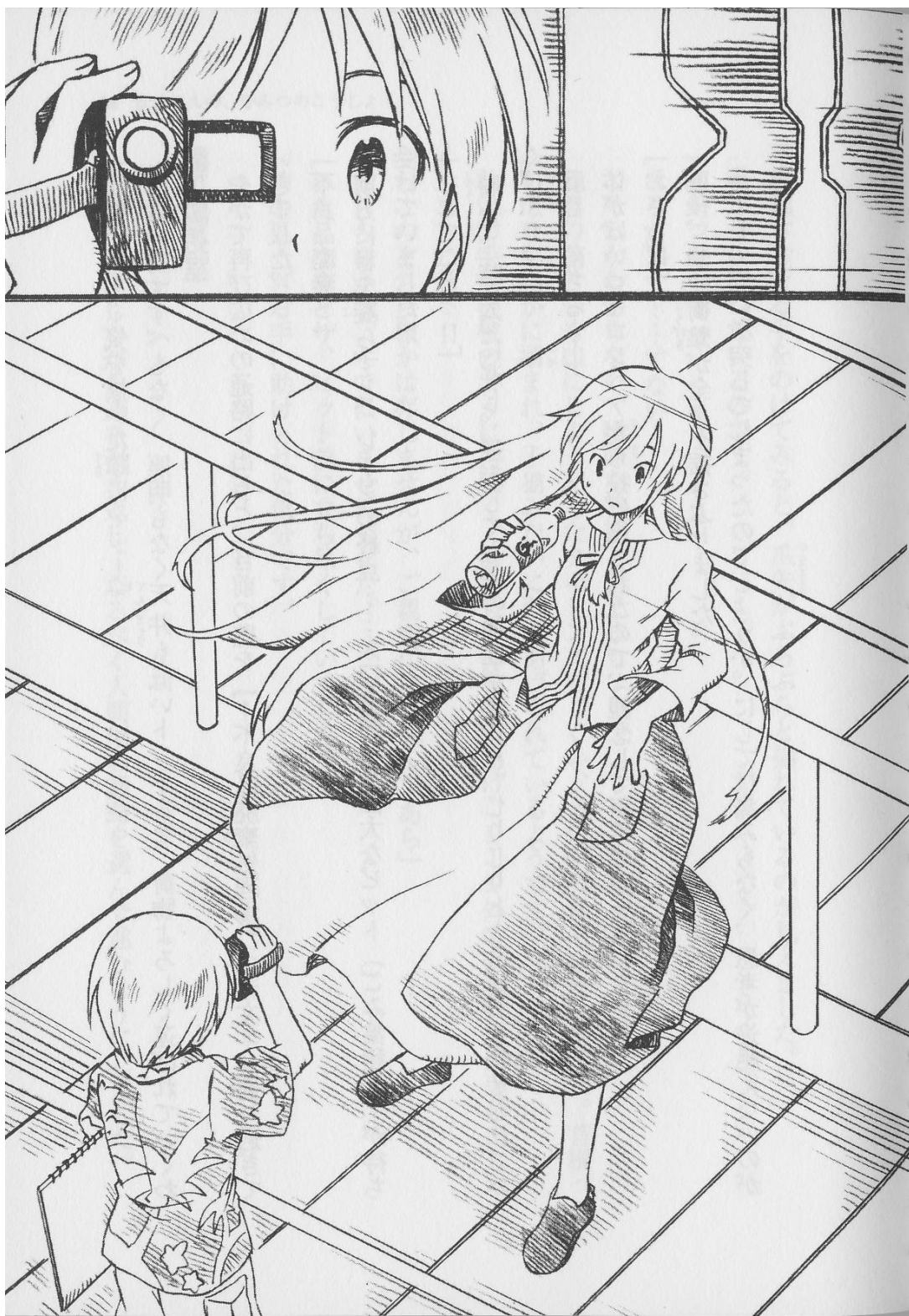
"I do not want to walk anymore."

"..."

A red number '18' passed by behind Assistant-san as he set his camera on me as I was resting. The wall with the number was sliding... no it was not, what was moving was—

"...hey."

Looking at my feet, I saw that the floor was made as a conveyor and was sliding, carrying us away. We were the ones moving.





"Is this... what if this is a conveyor for carrying things out?"  
I had gotten on it without noticing.  
Worse, the line I was on and the line Assistant-san was on seemingly had different destinations, as they split up partway through.  
"So everyone will disappear agaaain!"  
"..."  
Assistant-san waved his hand.  
"What the, so cheerful...!"  
He disappeared into another room still waving his hand.  
"Now I have done it... I had gotten distracted and then...!"  
With nothing more to be done about it, I was carried just like a baggage into tunnel with no illumination and low ceiling.  
Eventually I came out again into a wide passage, and on the wall the words "↑ faulty product disposal location" passed by.  
"Faulty product disposal?"  
I strained my eyes to look ahead, and at the end of the lane... there awaited a massive pit (the trash gathering hole) with its opening gaping wide.  
"What is this!!!"  
The time was already too late for confusion. I ran backwards but the floor's speed was higher, and I did nothing but be slowly yet steadily dragged towards the large hole.  
Oh no, I will fall in—  
My body was cast off the conveyor, so in resignation I covered my head with both hands.  
"Farewell."  
Right afterwards, a strong impact shook me.  
I guess I fell and impacted with the ground. For that, there was no pain, and it was a mystery how my thoughts had not interrupted.  
Fearfully I tried taking away my head and saw that my toes were dangling about.  
I was suspended in the air.  
"Saved..."  
...was I? ...was I not?  
I could not tell, let us call that an ambiguous situation.  
With just enough time to say something sarcastic, twitch, my body was lifted upwards. I had been caught by somebody around the nape of the neck and was being lifted up like a kitten.  
The saving hand was as powerful as a machine as it lifted me up, carrying me to the safe floor outside the lane.  
"Whoever it was I am not aware of, but I thank you for the kindness... oh dear."  
The whoever had already gone.  
I stood stock still before the pit, alone.  
I felt like I had been saved by the invisible hand of God.

## ■ Factory Manager Room

I backtracked the path while being careful at what was under my feet, choosing to go down passages for humans whenever possible.  
As I was walking, I unexpectedly ran into a human being.  
"W-, who are you...?"  
"Hmph, who are *you*?"

It was a man around his fifties who was sharply wearing a three-piece suit.

"The Cultural Office chief?"

He was a big shot in the UNESCO. Nickname was VIP Boss.

"Ohhh, sensei's... but didn't you cut your hair?"

"This is a wig."

"Why, I see... so, what are you doing here?"

"What, but I am doing my job. I am inspecting."

"Inspecting?!" The Boss made a startled face. "What does that mean?"

"Suspicious products are circulating in the village coming from this factory. I came with my Grandfather to inspect the situation."

"So sensei's also come?"

"Yes."

"I s-, see... well, I guess that would also happen. That's proof you people are proactive in your jobs. There's no problem."

"Uhm, you yourself, mister Boss, why are you here?"

The Boss averted his eyes and answered at a low voice.

"...because I'm the factory manager."

I did not understand what that meant.

"So you are the factory manager, mister Boss?"

"I'm both the office manager and the factory manager."

"What does that mean?"

The Boss put in his mouth one cigarette from a silver cigarette case, and took his time to light it with a lighter shining gold.

"Those are cigarettes from Fairy Co.," I pointed out with scornful eyes.

"They're nicotine free."

Then there was absolutely no meaning to the things.

"The factory's ethical protections eliminates the poisonous components. What an annoyance, hah hah."

"In other words, this was your responsibility, mister manager?"

"That's not it! After all, I too was only employed here but recently."

I recalled the words of the receptionist.

"Ah, mister Boss, could it be that until a while ago you were working as receptionist?"

"Mh-hm. But that was long ago. I've moved up in the world, now I'm factory manager."

"And the work of a manager consists of?"

"There's, well, not much to do, so..."

"You had nothing to do so you are sowing confusion in the Village? That is going to be a problem, however."

"Wait a moment, you," hearing a specific keyword, the Boss became panicked. "What problem. That's not true. It's not logical at all. Whatever, it's just wrong!"

"Well then, " I promptly tried a keyword. "Where is the location you are responsible for?"

"Mwoh!"

The Boss reacted to the word 'responsibility' with fright.

"Problem."

"Mwoh! (twitch)"

"Compensations."

"Mg'h! (twitch)"

"Fines."

"Nooooh! (big twitch)"

The Boss laid exhausted.

"...if you are afraid of causing problems, you should simply not have crossed that dangerous bridge."

"Woah, I really like the words 'consecutive jobs'! Call them a life's work if you like!"

Consecutive jobs. To be employed in legitimate jobs in a sequence.

"...that is truly the fine hobby."

I declared that with full sarcasm.

"I'm using my spare time, I can do whatever I want, can't I!"

I believed that ranking and honor were no things in this era, but I kept quiet.

"Whaaat, in other words, you are in the highest place of responsibility in Fairy Co., are you, mister Boss?"

"No, I said that's not true," the Boss still restrained me with one hand and continued his words. "I'm just responsible for the management of the factory, I'm still middle management."

"Then please let me meet with the people responsible. My Grandfather is also missing."

"The people responsible... on paper, the upper management does exist, but..."

"But?"

"I even never seen them either, see. Hah hah hah!"

"Really!"

"I rose up in the ranks by being promoted the once, the rules say that when a new person comes in I will be promoted even further, I think... next time I might become a member of the board!"

"Then you should first ask your administrative responsibilities to the factory chiefs, I think."

"No, I have no administrative responsibilities."

He asserted that clearly.

"Then could you have me meet with the upper management?"

"I've no idea where they are. Not even if they really exist..."

"Now just seriously," and as I held down the pain in my temples with my fingertips, "this might be a facility built by the fairies, you know?"

"It's not like I haven't considered that possibility."

"I believe this is enough games, how about we investigate...?"

"Of course, I understand," the Boss nodded with groundless vigor. "However that area is off limits to the authority of a factory manager, so I can't get in. We should only investigate once I move up in the world again, shouldn't we."

"Are you joking, mister Boss?!"

"No, that being said, just letting go of my important post when it's right before my eyes..."

This man was a prisoner of political power.

"Then we should do it like this," I used my intelligence and proposed this. After all, even I had some experience with this. "I will just up and go meet with the management. You do not know about it, mister Boss."

"...hmpf."

"How about that?"

The manager put on airs as he smoked his cigarette, and in that while he consolidated his words on his tongue.

"No need to even say it, I can't predict your every move. Politicians in the old times also said that often, I suspect. The secretary did everything, unquote."

"I believe that to be the worst possible example, however."

"You really understand things well, little lady. All right, then I will overlook your mistake last time, won't I."

"...thank you for that as well."

The Boss guided me all the way next to a no admittance area.

"Now that I think of it, mister manager, have you never heard about how the factory produces edible meat?"

"Call it meat if you want, but it's all synthesized... in the initial stages of operation, the lines worked, it seems. Whatever else, it's a fully automated factory, right. Factory manager's just a decorative name of sorts."

Also thinking about what the receptionist said, I had the feeling that they just forced themselves to use people.

"There, that's the no admittance area. I suspect the upper management's somewhere inside here."

The area up a staircase of just a few steps was a different world. Unlike the naked passageways that there had been until then, there was a floor covered with a high class scarlet red carpet, and both sides were filled with a line-up of smartly-made and well-decorated doors.

It was in the depths of the factory, it was not where there were guests. This was for the management ranks to use for themselves, and so they picked an interior with excessive decorations. The carpetry made that vulgar intent appear and then hide, and it felt uncomfortable in ways that it made the usual fairy things certainly unfelt.

"Now then, I am coming to visit without any strings attached. I do not wish to make this a big deal, be at ease."

"...are you prosecuting us now."

"I am doing nothing so exaggerated. We are grateful for the goods, but just up and putting them on shelves means everyone would find them suspicious and so no one will eat them, and I also have requests when it comes to several of their more careless behaviors, that is all. I would also like them to return Grandfather and Assistant-san, and that will be the end of that."

The Boss scratched his chin with a pensive face.

"...heroic conduct... whistleblowing... divulging the truth... the support of the population... installed as new company president..."

The Boss' darker desires came out of his mouth as they were.

"I know it, I gotta work with you, don't I. Why, losing my position's nothing important. It's for the people."

"...is that so."

The mere thinking of self-important people made for quite the study.

"Come on, let's go, come with me!"

Saying that like he was the one leading, the Boss ran up the stairs. The instant one of his feet stepped on the carpet, a large hole opened as if to say that a double-dealing man was not needed at Fairy Co.

The manager fell down into a darkness the bottom of which I could not see, his Western-looking smile still on him, .

"...I do hope he is not injured."

I had a conviction that said that we were being intentionally separated, indeed.

I was sure that Grandfather, Assistant-san, and the receptionist had also been similarly

excluded. The actions of the inspection group have been constantly monitored, no mistake. Avoiding the spot where the hole had opened, I advanced with prudence. There was not a particularly long distance to a dead end. Over there awaited a door bigger by a size, with a plate that said 'conference room' affixed on it.

## ■ Conference Room

Pushing the double-hinged door, I charged into the conference room. The high-class door opened without even a sound, and an unnatural silence came from inside the room with its lighting turned down. They were here. Even if they did not make a single sound, I could feel the definite presence of several people gathering. The projector, which was covering one side of the wall, was displaying a massive map. With the map there was something like a graph of shipments, I did not understand the specifics. The table, which had no corners and had the shape of a cloud, was surrounded by many revolving presidential chairs. The people sitting there were all too small, and I could not see them from my location. "...are you fairies?" I called them, but there was no response. Or so I thought, but a sneer of derision started seeping through in that unnatural silence made by held breaths. Sneers. That was not fairy-like, intuition told me. I spun the closest chair to me. What was sitting there shivered with a startle. "&%\$#%\$#&." The nature of that language that did not make for a voice was, it seemed, the sound of being startled and shaking. They had neither face nor mouth, they understood each other using body motions. Having no face meant in other words that they had nothing from the neck on up, their clean bodies did not have a single hair on it... and it was in short because they were processed edible meat. My, they were prepared chickens, that was all, chickens. In the presidential chairs all sat chickens. They were having a conference. All the chickens were emitting a sort of slyness that did not appear to come from ordinary means. "&#\$%&\$\$!" "Eh, what? I do not quite understand..." The language was different, however, and I could not even be expected to understand the meaning. Even the data contained in the projector was in chickenese (?). "Time to be of use!" The fairy appeared from a gap of my hair with a banzai pose.



"...so that was where you were."

"It may be cramped but this is still my fun home?"

"How rude."

"Should I translate?"

"Are you able to understand their words?"

"Just the nuances!"

The nuances, now.

"That would be fine, if you please..."

I should expected a fairy's nuances to be far more precise than a human's own.

"&#\$%&\$\$!"

The one in the chickens' leader role repeated the same thing and shook.

"Welcome, you bad-tasting human female."

"...huh?"

"That's what he's saying."

Ahhh, that was the translation.

"What does bad tasting mean?"

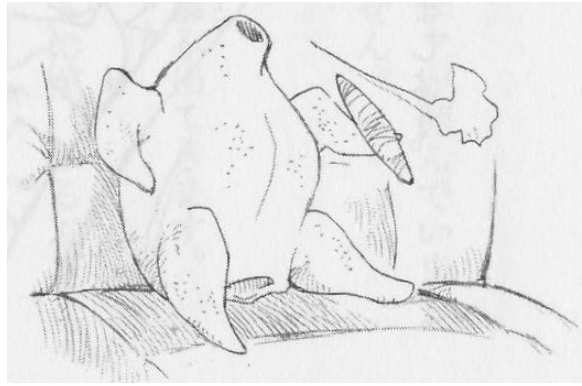
"%&#\$%\$#%&."

"The value of something without intelligence is decided by the taste of the meat... that's what he's saying."

Now what was he saying, this processed chicken here.

The chicken inserted a cigar in its cut-off neck and lit it with a golden lighter.

It emitted smoke, then again shivered.



"&%\$%\$%\$%."

"I'll first of all praise you for coming this far... that's what he said."

"...uhm, could you tell them that that premise so like an evil executive's does not matter, and that I want them to confess some things?"

"Ahhh, if I can vibrate just right..."

I see. Being able to tell the meaning and using the vibrating way of speaking were separate issues, indeed.

"This is tedious... I wish this was like in the end of a well-done mystery novel, where they all quickly confessed. Concisely."

I also had to search for the people that I had lost.

"Since you want that, I'll give you these. They're translation glasses," the fairy took out a pair of glasses. "Subtitles of all kinds are all yours!"

"My."

"They have a mike. Your words will also reach the person you're speaking to."

Without having any doubts I wore them.

It looked like they were such that, when there was need for translation of what I was seeing through the glasses, subtitles appeared on the lenses. I promptly gave my eyes to the processed chickens.

"\$%&## (subtitle: still, you are too late.)"

"Ah, it really makes subtitles appear. Convenient."

"&%\$# (subtitle: before striking you down I will explain. By having control over distribution, we have the real power.)"

"Huh."

Control? Real power?

"You have power of the distribution of foodstuff in the Village?"

"\$%###\$% (subtitle: everything dances on the palm of our hands. But that's not all.)"

The processed chicken spread the tip of its hand-wings wide and proudly boasted this.

"#&&#\$%! (subtitle: soon our factory will also produced weapons!)"

"I have a feeling that the focus of the subtitles is a little off..."

Even as I was laboring to adjust the glasses, the chickens seemed to be speaking of their magnificent saga.

"%\$#\$ (subtitle: that said, our existence will never be revealed to humans.)"

"&#&& (subtitle: the secrecy of Fairy Co. is flawless.)"

"###\$& (subtitle: that's because humans that know nothing are themselves protecting the Fairy Co. entrance.)"



"%\$#& (subtitle: and the weapons will crush this marvelous civilization without leaving even a trace.)"

"#%\$\$ (subtitle: and we should be able to build a new, great civilization on those ruins.)"

"\$\$#& (subtitle: just try imagining what position the humans of that time and the fairies will occupy! And despair!)"

"And that will do."

I was at last able to obtain a satisfying adjustment of the focus.

"So... what were you talking about?"

"%\$#&... (subtitle: that discussion right now was important...)"

"I thought it inconsequential, so I did not read it."

"&... #\$\$ (subtitle: in short... we're going to rule the Earth.)"

"You are never going to be able to do that."

"&\$#%& (subtitle: it's going to be simple. Just a little bit more and we will lift the curtain.)"

"So that was what you were thinking... I am glad I came for an inspection."

I quickly walked forwards.

And there, the processed chickens spasmed with a twitch, and one after another revolved off the chairs.

"&%#%\$ (subtitle: c-, cease your pointless struggling!)"

"No, this is a battle scene where we stake everything on our reciprocal life or death, what did you think?"

Just in case I did bring a weapon. A tiny, light weapon that was easy to use.

"Here, a chicken disassembly knife."

When the blade appeared before them, the chickens' shivering increased.

"#%\$! (subtitle: copulation!)"

Copulation?

"##\$! (subtitle: what do you think you're going to do!)"

"Well, you people seem to be sort of weak, so then... I suppose I will say you have zero hit points."

The chickens all at once moved slightly (with the nuance of short shouts).

"\$\$! (subtitle: criticism!)"

"&&&! (subtitle: sacred excrement!)"

"#%\$! (subtitle: copulation!)"

"\*! (subtitle: anus!)"

"%&! (subtitle: female dog!)"

...it seems these cannot be translated well.

Was it damaged? A mistake in translation?

Tug, tug.

The fairy was pulling my hair.

"What is it?"

"I made the glasses, sooo, an offering to the artist please (subtitle: exchanging lucky glasses for a single coin does happen, see)."

That was a liberal translatiooon!

Liberal translations at times do change the meaning, you see!

I saw the level of liberal translation from Chickenese as fairly high.

"That before was not mistaken behavior, it appears that it was just directly translating their foul-mouthedness, I see."

"One coin, one coin and it will be happiness!"

"Fine, fine..."

I handed him one chocolate pound.

"##! (subtitle: you fool!)"

The chicken used a remote control he had at hand and massively sized cage descended from the ceiling, enclosing us both.

"...oh no."

"#\$%& (subtitle: I'll give you some memory loss drug and ship you to who knows where!)"

"Being shipped could be a good learning chance?"

"I am not going to learn."

The cage was firmly made and heavy, and nothing could be done with human strength. This was a pickle.

"Grrr, the invisible hand of God is not acting, then."

It did not seem like I would have to worry that my life would be taken, but having to reset my life would be harsh.

"&& (subtitle: you can just watch us rule from some unknown faraway land!)"

Right then, a petite boy flew inside the door that had been left open.

The special weapon shining dully at his breast was a super-small type videocamera. It was Assistant-san.

He moved nimbly from cover to cover. With what I could call special corps-like motions, Assistant-san cut across the conference room.

He activated the videocamera's digital camera function and pulled the trigger... no, the shutter, and the anti-stealth photo gunshot thundered at a loud volume.

This time, terror exploded among the chickens.

They made a big mess up and down inside the conference room.

Assistant-san continued to pull the shutter, and the sound of gunshots continued to play.

Whatever he shot would be a scoop. He was at that point entrapped by exclusive news.

"&%\$! (subtitle: this guy mebbe bad!)"

"#\$%! (subtitle: run away!)"

"&&&! (subtitle: gotta escape!)"

"%#\$! (subtitle: help!)"

The chickens ran away.

Assistant-san tenaciously chased after them like a paparazzi.

I wanted to follow after him, but the cage was too robust and I could not move.

Tug, tug.

"Yes, what is it?"

The bars right behind me, which Nakata-san was pointing at, were twisted enough that a person could pass through.

"They have been widened?"

There it was, God's invisible hand.

"Who could have done something this powerfully?"

"Who knows?"

Exactly so.

"Well, this is still to be thankful for. Thank you, God!"

I gave a brief prayer and decided to chase after Assistant-san as well.

Chasing the chickens running about, trying to escape, I came into the factory section.

The groups of factories were making all sorts of products. I could advance a mere ten meters and the product created had changed.

There were some active production lines, and some that were stopped.

Just when I saw that soap wrapped in wrapping paper was being properly produced, I saw that endless numbers of pointless blank paperbacks were also being printed.

The production lines that had fallen into stoppage because, even if they had the production program, they had run out of materials stood out. For example the production line that made cereals, had its emptied tank for grains left open, and the low ingredient warning was blinking. At some unknown point, the control of the chickens had become incomplete.

In an automated factory, the space in which humans could move about was limited.

Instead, machines big and small and conveyor belts had the main roles here.

The majority of those machines had their mouths open like starving baby birds, waiting for the source materials to be filled in their tanks.

### ■ Canned Products Production Factory

The impressive sound of machines operating meant that everything here was tin canned, which, now that I said it, indicated that these were production lines for omnivores.

The mechanism was such that, once surplus material was discovered inside the facility, conveyors carried them in and tossed it into the machines, and after easily adjusting its flavor, they promptly canned the thing.

So the program rich in versatility canned the majority of things, I see.

I believed that it had not caught humans and processed them, however.

It was just... how were they doing it?

The chickens, their calmness lost, were stuck in the cramped passageways of the factory. We chased them and they promptly got confused, seeking a way out they threw themselves into the tanks' replenishment openings (they were made like dust chutes so they were easy to enter).

"Awww, awww, awww, what a place to enter..."

The tank was connected to the massive processing machine via pipeline.

The blue light that was on the console turned red, the message of insufficient materials vanished, and the machine began furiously operating.

Clang clang clang clang.

Creak creak creak creak.

Thunk thunk thunk thunk.

Soon enough an alarm rang, the light returned from red to blue, and the machine stopped operating.

The belt conveyor moved and a freshly made canned product was spat out from inside the machine.

A Fairy Co. fried chicken can.

I took it in my hand and found it was still warm. Maybe the excess heat from processing, or

maybe...

"...bwaaah!"

I decided not to think too deeply about it.

"Let us chase the main force."

Worse, the ordeals of the chickens did not end there.

As they had to cross several factory plots in their escape, hurried by the gunshots and footsteps behind them, they were mechanically moving, their wills ignored. Cowardice did that to you.

One after another the chickens impacted with dangerous factory machinery as if sucked in by them, and were processed.

I will document here their heroic march towards death.

### ■ Curry Factory

The chickens who jumped into this processing line's tanks came out as boil-in-the-bag chicken curry. The labels had the catchphrase 'Double Chicken' nicely printed on them.

### ■ T-shirt Factory

A very stylish simplistic T-shirt featuring a walking processed chicken will monopolize the talk of this Summer. Please do not mind how the sewed area occasionally still twitches.

### ■ Press Factory

They came out as two video discs, they were Volume 1 of a thirty minutes per episode cartoon featuring funny chicken characters. Production of Volume 2 pending.

### ■ Bread Factory

You must try at least once our brand new product, Chicken Skin Bread.

### ■ Sensor Factory

If it is a chicken (cowardice) sensor that boasts high detection output that you need, then you can create secure environments.

With one thing or another, by the time they left the building the number of chickens had quite diminished.

They were made into products in the factory they themselves managed, this could not be called anything but pitiable.

It was just, there were still quite the number remaining.

"It seems that they ran away from the back door."

The imposing factory now towered behind me.

Even after they managed to leave the factory, the group of chickens kept running straight forwards.

"Now just you wait!"

There were no walls ahead of them, there was only a cliff edge there.  
I thought that the whole of the plot was covered by walls, however the back side repelled intruders by using natural formations.  
Whichever it was, this was checkmate.  
"Well now, it seems we have caught up with you..."  
The chickens grouped at the cliff edge, unable to advance or to go back, doing nothing but twitching.  
First of all we should catch them all, bring them back to the Village, use the glasses to make them confess... and this will be the conclusion of the present matter, or so I hoped. However, incredibly,  
"\$%#! (subtitle: this is the end!)"  
"...what? What?"  
I could not believe it, I would have never thought they would face the precipice and jump down.  
"Whaaaat?!"  
"...!"  
I could tell that Assistant-san was putting more force in the hand he held the camera with. The chickens, led to the extremes of stress, had passed beyond their mental limits and flapped the tips of their chicken wings as they threw themselves into the air, just like they were being shoved in from behind.  
One chicken after another threw itself in.  
That was because the hysteric urge instantaneously spread in the flock. Minds that had lost their place to flee could only gain tranquility by releasing themselves in unexpected ways.  
"Awwwwwww..."  
A scene bizarre even in this world, that of a group suicide of chicken, laid right there before me.  
"...!"  
Assistant-san, who had made his a decisive scoop, continued endlessly to shoot with the camera with wild nasal breathing.  
Seemingly not shocked by any of this, the fairy said this.  
"...Shall We Dive?"  
"I Can Not Fly!"  
Awww, how was I going to put this in my report...

After having made ours an impactful video of group suicide, we decided to search for Grandfather.  
"How did you make it all the way to the conference room, Assistant-san?"  
"....."  
"What, once you followed the scent of scoop you found it all alone?"  
What we could call a reporter's sense, I suppose. No, wait, I did not understand what he was saying at all.  
We once again entered the factory without a single clue, walked around inside the building, messed with consoles we did not understand the functions of, and when we at long last found the vanished people, it was half a day later.  
"That took you a while."  
Grandfather, the Boss, and also the receptionist were gathered in what was called the factory's game room.



The games room had a colorful and heartfelt and funny interior design, and it felt like the target age was five years and below.

In the room, which had a bizarreness to it that, depending on usage, could also have been the set of a psycho movie, we found the three playing a board game.

"...now just what are you doing?"

"Playing Monopoly. Wanna join?"

"I shall pass."

"You seem tired. We just made some tea."

I received some freshly brewed tea from the receptionist, and tiredness assaulted me from somewhere.

"Well, we didn't know how to come out from inside."

"There was no door. Until milady came in right now, that is."

Grandfather and the Boss said that without taking their eyes off the game board.

"You are quite the people for enjoying a game under that situation."

The receptionist answered with a smile to those words I meant as sarcastic.

"It's small but there was a bed, there were bedsheets, and even a toilet, so we weren't really in a panic."

"And food?"

"There's a panel right there. It's used as a menu, just input what you want and the mechanism brings it from somewhere in the factory."

The subtitles were harsh on my tired head, so for the time being I decided to remove my glasses.

"What's with those glasses?"

"...I will explain later. I am just a little bit tired."

"We got food. Now that milady and the boy have come, it's about time for dinner, I suppose."

"Mh-hm. You go do that."

The Boss answered the receptionist with the carelessness of a superior.

Sandwiches for five people were ordered from the panel.

"Many items are exhausted, so it's hard to call it a varied menu," went the Boss.

Not long afterwards we heard the sound of a locomotive.

"What is that?"

"Oooh, it's come."

Chooo, chooo.

In a section of the wall, a hole about the size a cat could go through opened with a thunk. They mixed with the colorful pattern of the floor so I did not notice it, but there was a non-protruding railway there.

The tiny locomotive was dragging five freight cars as it came from the hole.

"Let's have dinner."

The receptionist took with practiced hands the sandwich plates from the cargo plates of the express train that had stopped right next to them.

"..."

Assistant-san's eyes were fixed on the locomotive. He seemed to be quite liking it, I saw...

I was being silly.

"Say, you, what're the ingredients of the sandwiches?"

"They seem to be all chicken sandwiches, Factory Manager."



I nearly spewed out my tea.

Right... that was how it was...

"Poor chickens."

And still, it was a mystery how, when the belly was fully, my mood on edge and my tiredness were squished away by the sense of full stomach, and the details became irrelevant.

"Looks like I win."

It appeared that, when Grandfather bankrupted the other two, the game was over.

"Dear dear. Although it's in a game, being financially ruined is frustrating."

"Uhm, boss? Even in reality we might be on the brink of financial ruin, you know?"

"...was there another disturbance?" and Grandfather's eyes shone.

"Indeed there was, you see..."

I explained what had happened inside the factory since we split up.

"I see now, so they were behind everything."

"You are not very surprised."

"I was thinking who it could be besides the fairies."

"Sensei, in other words, what does this all mean?"

"This factory has been made by the hands of fairies, no mistaking that, but... it seems the lower ranks overthrew them somehow, that's what I think."

"Grandfather, that would mean..."

"The chickens who were being made into foodstuff at the factory gained intelligence and an uprising occurred."

"...that was what it would come to, just as I believed."

"To make synthesized foodstuff with the shape and flavor of sardines, there's no need to create fake processed chickens. What was witnessed at the Village appears to have been the first shipment. I suspect there wasn't just the one."

"And what does it mean to have only chickens having gained intelligence?"

"...no idea. There's a possibility that the similarly synthesized sardines and jam could also have come into intelligence. They just don't have a way of saying it."

Bwah, that was a cruel statement.

"They could think and feel, but could not tell others, then?"

"We may not expect it, but it's possible that all sorts of things near us can think but can't say it out loud. We have no way of making sure, though."

"Huh? But these translation glasses should be able to take the voice even of things that say nothing..."

Impossible, so I quickly suppressed my idea.

If that were to happen, I could no longer eat anything.

"Sensei, and I'm actually interested by this, but let's leave the philosophical discussion at that. In other words, this factory is not a relic of humans, it's been made by the fairies, is that it?"

"I guess so."

"Then, there was an uprising or something, so, what happens next?"

"Mh-hm, to explain this easily..." Grandfather pointed at the manager. "You raise in rank and become the CEO, that's what it means."

"Bwooooooh, I've done iiiit!"

The Boss burst out.

"A gentleman among gentlemen, who held a number of important jobs in sequence, that's me!"

The Boss made a President Smile that could only be made when a middle aged man's

bitterness and heat had reached the max-out point, thrust up both fist and made a double fist pump. Then he said something problematic.

"Now that I hold supplying in my hands, I have no more enemies! I will be the ruler of humanity, the King of Gentlemen!"

Grandfather, the receptionist, and I watched the Boss' Confession Time with quite the expressionlessness. With the resignation that this man was indeed that kind of man, ahhh, yes.

"So, what do I do?"

He whispered at Grandfather's ear.

"Gotta consult with the fairies, right, have them work the facility so that it can't be misused..."

"Those fairies are nowhere to be found. Except for this one."

"Yessah!" went Mr. Nakata.

"...so they got fed up and scattered, that it?"

"No, there was an uprising, so you see..."

After Grandfather had ransacked through the room overflowing with toys, he contemplated for several minutes still on his feet, then stood before the panel.

"As this room is made so that it won't open from the inside, it's overflowing with tools to chase away boredom, which means... there it is."

"What?"

Grandfather manipulated the panel and made what appeared to be a new order.

The sound of the locomotive soon approached.

"Looks like it's coming. Oooh, and what an impressive number."

Before it was six carriages, this time it was sixteen carriages.

The receptionist carried out plastic bags from the rack. There were a large number.

They were packages in which a doll set on paper had been covered in plastic from above. I took one in hand and gasped.

"They're called blister packs or something."

"But inside... there are no dolls, there are fairies?"

"I suppose they've been packaged as a result of the uprising. They were going to be shipped away, no mistake."

A feeling I could not describe welled up in me.

And then, thinking of how much effort it would take to release them one by one from the packages, I became a little melancholy.

"...could this be called slave trade, I wonder."

My whisper vanished in the Boss' audience-free performance art.

"First and to start with, we will revive all the systems that were lost! We will control the population, rule distribution, and manipulate economics! When we're done, founding a superunited nation will be easy! That Eldorado will take the most powerful of political forms, the one I've thought up, an absolute monarchy camouflaged as a democracy! Let's conquer!"  
"....."

Assistant-san alone carefully took video of that of the Boss'.

That night, in the end, we spent dusk to dawn at the factory releasing the fairies.

The fairies after they came out of the packs had completely forgotten what they had done, as always they had no discernment.

With nothing to be done, Grandfather and I tried to investigate the facility again of our own strength, and we established that the factory power supply was a battery.

When we took off the lid buried in the wall of the central control room, we found a battery with the logo of Fairy Co. (nickname Fairy Battery). There was just the single one.

"So this one thing can output power to rival a power plant."

"More than supertechnology it is some sort of gag, indeed."

The battery was nearly exhausted, however that was merely a trifle, so we did not report anything to the Boss. We only needed to wait three more days.

To make a battery the factory had to be operating, to operate the factory a battery was necessary.

How did they manage in the beginning, I wondered. I really did not understand.

Well, the fairies were truly a mystery.

We promised to reward the fairies with sweets and released them on the spot.

The only thing they did not forget was about sweets, so they will eventually show their faces around the village. When they next did, I was sure that the resource scarcity will have been resolved.

"What? The resource scarcity in Kusunoki Village? No need to worry! Just leave it all to me. I will make preparations right away for the UN to hand us their emergency stockpiles, right. What, a little bit of waste isn't any problem. We're about to regain the centuries we've wasted!"

I returned home, slept soundly, and woke up to a morning with some sluggishness still remaining to me.

I felt an unusual hunger.

That was still proof that I was in good health.

I had moved plenty, and as a result of the commensurate tiredness, the first thing I had after rising was an empty stomach.

It was a good thing.

For all that, there was all that effort made just to gain a scrap of meat.

Was the result not one that made you think about many things?

How the chickens felt as they resisted being eaten was also an extremely natural thing, I thought.

All except that final group suicide, which was an actually disappointing conclusion, though. I saw their behavior as one that did not really fear falling down and dying.

Were they confused to that extent?

Well, let us leave detailed thinking for when we compile the report.

I stood before the mirror and cleaned myself up.

"Hummm, the brush, the brush."

I could not see my brush. I looked around with drowsy eyes, but could not search properly.

Then someone nearby, with a very and truly gentlemanly timing, offered me the brush.

"My, thank you... mh?"

After accepting it without much of a care I gave my eyes to the person, and found there was no person there, and in its stead,

my hair,

was undulating,

and like a sea snake floated on the sea,

it was floating. In the air.

The hair seemed to be wanting to tell me something, as it slowly shook itself.

I promptly equipped the translation glasses and it was shown as subtitle.

"... (subtitle: is there anything else you are searching for, Master?)"

The sentient hair showed total loyalty to her master, I, and continued dancing like seagrass.

"Could it be that it was you when I fell and even when I was sealed in the cage?"

"... (subtitle: ohhh, but saving my Master is the natural thing to do!)"

Well, I could say that my hair was my long-standing friend...

Here I will change scene for a while.

Location was outside the Village. The poorhouse.

The poorhouse was a facility that took on children without parents and raised them.

Children without parents existed no matter the age, and they needed guardianship and looking after.

The poorhouse had a clergyman, and he well looked after the children.

The clergyman was inarticulate, and he seemed to not get well with the other people in the Village. Regardless, he seemingly did not make use of welfare, and made a livelihood with self-sufficiency and trade of goods.

Happily, the house had livestock and poultry.

No matter the age, as long as you had two cows and a few ducks, you would not know hunger.

That being said, the children did number eight.

Though they may have been able to have a life, they were seemingly not able to create savings, and they spent their days as if walking a tightrope.

That was why, though children, those with enough age had mountains of work to do.

Dealing with their siblings, managing the fields, looking after the livestock...

The work that awaited a girl of fifteen was tremendous.

"Even then, I'm sure that there's going to be something Good!"

It seems that at that time, she was still searching for Good Things in her daily life.

With that difficult life, the joy given to them by tiny happy events had to be the salt of their lives.

That was why livestock falling ill and dying was a serious blow, and the clergyman himself also had a wicked cold that aggravated and led to his death, so it was not hard to guess that they would fall all at once into distress.

Managing the house whole was then the job of the eldest child.

There was no other choice.

Not even the choice of going to a Village scarce in goods to exchange and relying on people.

Life was very tough. Their life became even poorer, with problems in finding what to eat on each day.

The girl that represented the poorhouse became pessimistic, and her catchphrase inverted.

She came to see only things that were Not Good.

"What are we eating today?" asked the children.

"What did you eat last night?" asked their older sister back.

"Weed soup."

"For most of this week, that will be supper."

The children pouted, but they did not complain.

When they complained too much they became fodder for the representative's No Good Thing Search, and they did not want that.

When the field was ransacked by a harmful animal, the system of self-sufficiency at the house at long last collapsed.

They came to search for jobs at the Village that they had been estranged from.  
 With everything aside, the first thing they needed was meat.  
 When the clergyman was alive they did not eat meat due to his directions, but it now did not matter.  
 Food with high nutritional value: that was what meat was.  
 One week of daily visits passed. At last the girl was able to come by a meat job, but... the result was what I had already spoken. The poorhouse was now struggling several steps ahead of even the Village with its food shortage.  
 The poorhouse, which made use of an old church, did not have an oven.  
 Cooking was in an open furnace... in other words it was carried out in open air and on an open fire.  
 They placed a needlessly big pot on the hearth, poured water in, and what they made was, that day and today as well, weed soup.  
 When the smell of food started wafting in, the children gathered. With a faint expectation in their hearts, they asked this.  
 "Big sis, what's for supper today?"  
 "What was for supper yesterday?"  
 "Weed soup."  
 "And unless quails start falling from the sky, that will be today's supper too."  
 "....."  
 That example came from an episode in the Bible, and if you ate that quail you would be struck by God's wrath and die, you see.  
 So what to do.  
 "Sigh, if only I had gotten some meat from that job."  
 The girl felt weak and exhaled a long sigh, and then heard a faint sound from above the cut-up stone wall standing around ten meters tall that served as windbreak for the hearth.  
 In the gaze of the girl as she looked up there scattered several dark figures.  
 Not one of them was able to move. They thought they were falling stones.  
 Falling things the size of a person's head tumbled down the cliff, and by the invisible hand of God they were made to chute into the pot.  
 The still cold water, the fire having just been lit, leaped up in the shape of crowns. What hit the children was just water, happily the falling things did not strike them on the head.  
 One after another they fell, followed the same track and landed into the pot.  
 "What is this, just what is this!"  
 All there decided to check what was inside the pot.  
 And there they found...  
 "...chickens," a boy whispered, enraptured.  
 Prepared edible meat, 1 whole x12.  
 They filled the whole pot like a mountain.  
 "So some really fell. ...they're not quails, though. Ahhh, God! It's been a while since we've seen You, I apologize deeply. Just this once..."  
 She had prayed to God for several years, it was said.  
 "Big sis, what's dinner tonight?"  
 The children asked.  
 "It's meat, nothing else."  
 And then, it was said that from that day thence, every time they were about to starve, processed chickens gave themselves up as sacrifices.

In the shock of being touched by human hands, the chickens stopped moving as if it had been a tradition.

What a mystery.

Their lives remained harsh, but she would no longer do her No Good Thing search, it was said.

## **Fairy Memo - Fairy Co. Hair Growth Formula**

Unlike so-called hair growth formulas, this Hair Growth Formula really makes the hair you have strong and vital.

Since it was produced by the fairies, the effect is outstanding.

By the way, in the hair care industry calls customers with little hair to injure Low Hairs, but won't that roundabout expression conversely hurt them?



妖精さんの、ひょうりゅうせいかつ  
The Fairies and the Wandering Life



Island: The Beginning.

We had an unbelievable beginning of life on an island.

I was, at present, on an island. I was soaked to the skin.

"H-, how did I get into this situation...?"

Although the sun was still high, the lake shore was chilly on the skin, and on top of that I was soaking wet. I had no change, I could not return home, and I had nearly no luggage.

I could not quite have any more anxiety for my future than in a situation like this.

"Why?"

"Why indeed!" "Can anybody tell?" "What a truly unthinkable event!" "More like, where's here?" "It's an island!" "Uh-huh!"

The group of fairies as usual went about their free talking at my feet.

They were as wet as I was, however they did not seem to be cold. Common sense did not apply at all to the super small sized humanity, at a height of ten centimeters.

"One, two, three..."

The fairies numbered eight.

How there were fewer of them than had rode here with me was worrisome.

"Uhm, you people, there does seem to be some of you missing, however?"

"Really?" "Ahhh, they might have gone." "Address unknown!" "Is anyone not here?" "No idea!"

"Really dunno!" "Then they're not here!"

The fairies looked all around them... and that was it.

"Will you not search?"

"They died, maybe," was the expressionless answer.

"Come on now, really, come on now!"

This of theirs was sort of scary, or rather, I became uncomfortable when they started acting differently from humans.

"Let us search, all right?"

"Then, randomly!" "At leisure!" "It's the providence of nature, however!" "It's no big deal?"

"Well, it'd be nice if we found them!" "Though I think they died!"

For being good companions to humans, fairies had a certain indifference to them.

Awww, and all that aside... an island.

We had been shot up on one of the several small islands on the lake, shivering in wetness and cold, with no house to rest ourselves and not even the means to start a fire.

Why did this happen—?

To sort through this situation, I needed to go back on my memories to several days earlier.

On one chilly day of Summer, I discovered an unthinkable change in my daily life that had been showing no improvement.

"Why, you people..."

The fairies that had come to visit the Office all stopped moving and pointed their eyes at me.

"You know you are two-paired?"

One of the fairies holding a mushroom made of biscuit and chocolate (a handmade sweet) returned me a comment as representative.

"It's not a bad thing!"

I was not really knowledgeable, but I believed a two-pair won over a one-pair.

Still, what I wanted to say was not that it was a bad thing for them or anything.

"Is it bad if we are two-paired?"

"It is not bad, however... people becoming two-paired would be bizarre."

The nine fairies that had come to visit were each eating and playing around the plate of sweets, however as soon as they heard my words they gathered in a single solid block on top of the desk, and began their usual discussion.

"Trouble has arisen!" "We were told we're weird!" "What's weird?" "According to the dictionary, mysterious and suspicious, that's it!" "Mysterious!" "Suspicious!" "Are we being suspicious?" "Mysteriously odd!" "Not ununderstandable!" "Do we open a summit?"

The fairies were the type to have a meaning in just being there, so perhaps they held unthinkably important jobs (for example, the sort that bacteria have) when they were in areas beyond human control, but when they were playing, they were just kids... or rather, they were no more than highly adorable beings created by adding a parrot's talking abilities to a squirrel's behavior and splitting the two.

These were the Present Humanity, the species who ruled Earth. Therefore, when saying 'humanity' one indicated the fairies, and there were many among us who simply called ourselves 'mere humans'.

And humanity could do whatever it liked with Earth.

Far back into the past, us humans had done exactly that.

Fairies were therefore beings to which anything was permitted, however, they did nothing.

They may have built big cities, but they abandoned them in three days.

They may have reached a state of civilization, but they would promptly consign it to oblivion.

As for what they do, they just came by to be spoiled by the humans they like, like they were doing now. They had just come to receive their favorite food, sweets.

And that was when this had begun happening among them.

"Yesterday you were one-pair, the day before that three-of-a-kind."

"We get it."

The fairies seemed persuaded and pointed to the four offenders.

"In other words, you people are to blame."

"What a nice hello!" "That's slander!" "I'm calling my lawyer!" "This is a total false accusation!"

A double pair all with the exact same personality.

It was like having two pairs of twins.

Fairies had little individuality to begin with, so when they had very different personalities they stood out.

Yesterday there was one pair of twins, two days ago there were triplets.

"Why, is that becoming popular?"

The two-pair voice was as one.

""""Who knows?""""

What else (I had anticipated that).

"It is fine, actually, really. It is yet not decided whether this will be trouble. It is just, by tomorrow you will become a four-card, perhaps."

The next day, what visited the Office was a chaos of two pairs + three of a kind.

There were several fairies who had the same figure.

"You are really fat, you people."

"We sort of got big!" "We were doing as usual, though!" "What a mystery!" "What will happen if we double up?" "Will you give us up to the trade?" "Trading Humanity!"

"Trading will not do."

"Will we sell? Will we sell?"

It looked like they wanted to be sold. I poked their bellies with my fingertips, and they wiggled

as they made their usual ruckus.

Still, thirteen had come and nearly all were perfect reflections, what did that mean?

Peering into my desk, Grandfather said this.

"If I have to say it, it feels like you got four concealed triplets in there."

"Carefree, are we, mister boss with the highest responsibility..."

"This here's the double yakuman course. Depending on wind speed, this risks destroying their human relationships."

Forget carefree, he was sort of enjoying this.

"Still, this might not be a good trend."

"How come?"

"Shouldn't we see this as a form clannification?"

"Clannification?"

"You ever investigated how fairies multiply?"

"That, well... several times."

To put it properly that was not a question I wanted to consider much. There was a theory that they increased via division, but... that was hard to accept, so I had my own creative theory, which was that they increased by sleight of hand.

"It is just that, I have hit upon many documents and writings concerning fairies, however this specific research has never caught my eyes, I must say."

"...making that into a taboo, right. You see, it's because it's just a load of nonsense."

"Of course."

I wanted to accept that. But people with hard heads, in particular, had many things they could not accept, you see.

"And so they do the thing."

Grandfather did not really want to use the word 'division'. As expectable from one of the scholars, he had opposition to it.

"They don't do sexual reproduction, so their population increases without exchanges of genes, meaning... in short, that there are many individuals that have the same makeup data, that's what it's gonna mean."

"Like unicellular organisms, then."

"If that's the case, how they preserve diversity becomes the question. Maybe they carry it out only by accumulation of mutations, or maybe it's some unknown different way."

"Are they not simply a species that can survive without much in the way of diversity, then?"

I said that mostly offhand.

Grandfather made a face like he did not like that.

"So they don't need that diversity? When there's dramatic changes in their environment they would just be exterminated, you know?"

"After all, you see, they are fairies."

An odd silence fell between us.

In the end, Grandfather let this out as if giving up.

"...a biological approach is useless at this point, that's for sure."

"It could be that the fairies are able to choose the personality they are going to have, maybe."

"If we're going to think that they acquire an optimal personality for genetic diversity that way, then they got to have a high capacity for discrimination... and it doesn't really look like they do."

"That is the part one cannot determine without a long-term view, indeed."

"If you ignore it, it can happen that by the time you notice there's a problem it's too late."

"Could a personality with problems be then easily copied and take hold within a species?"

"They would come to lose uniformity, then."

"But is that truly individuality, I must ask. If we consider that they are simply different in attire, then..."

"I just don't get that part. If this clannification lasts any longer, then we might have to think about it. Excessive political intervention isn't the job of a Mediator, but the influence of us mere humans ought avoid damage, I believe."

"That'd be made aaall good with some money, you see," a fairy said like an old lady.

"Then shall we come up with some way to deal with this?"

"Think you can?"

"If we persuade them carefully..."

In short, sermonizing to them.

"Subject?"

"The rotten apple inside the box."

"....."

Grandfather made a hard face, but the twist in his lips said he was enjoying this.

"...well, given how they are, even if we leave it be and it gets big, it shouldn't prove fatal."

"I would like this not to get big in the first place."

My heart's Geiger counter was ticking fast, you see.

I could not think of anything as far as a solution strategy except for the cruel sermon I just spoke of, one that would chastise their misconducts, and that was unacceptable.

Let us survey the typical state of the fairies.

In the end, what I had thought of was that.

When they were next to humans they became all shy, and they could not show their true figure.

This tendency existed also in humans, I believed.

And so I secretly inspected the fairies' activities. I might get at least a hint as to what influence there would be should their clannification continue.

With some expectation I went to meet the fairies down a wild small path.

They were a species with strong tendencies to be homeless, and they did not set up houses often. So I attempted to encounter them by wandering the outdoors.

The fairies being bad with strangers appears to be rooted in a mental state of liking them too much and thus becoming shy. Mere humans like me, who interacted with them daily, were in the minority.

It was early morning, and I was rustling about each and every thicket still wet with morning dew to see if it concealed the tiny humanity.

"There they are, there."

I spotted a group of fairies in a rotten out house that no one lived in anymore, in a thicket of grass in the front garden. I concealed myself where I could hear their voices, and began observation via tiny binoculars.

"B-, but this...!"

#### ○ Situation

**Number of fairies... about fifteen**

**Looks of the fairies... all tweed jackets with accompanying trousers, schoolwear-style**

**Location... top of a discarded bench**

## **Situation... movie set in the style of a classroom**

It was like a group of fairies in a school setting, though set in times past. It had a vivid resemblance to a prestigious public school of the good old times, which now laid abandoned. Since they all had the exact same facial features, it did not seem like those clothes were merely in fashion.

Unlike fairies as usual, they were low on cheerfulness. They did not run around noisily nor did they make a commotion. How high class.

The dignity of people raised to be gentlemanly seemed to refine their behavior. They had the fragrant scent of culture, the upright demeanor born of laws.

They were enjoying wild strawberries like a human would bite into an apple and exchanging a pleasant conversation.

"Next week we will have elections for the residents' association." "Will you be participating?" "Who knows, now." "Hey, stop talking about elections." "To participate to residents' association election means you have to have experience as a prefect." "And I do." "Then let us hear your public commitment." "I will split sweets equally?" "You are talking about something like a collectivist society."

As the pertinently high-class conversation continued, one student commuted in from beyond the trees.

Wearing of course a jacket, there was no sloppiness in his attire.

As it happened, when that one came the conversation between fairies on the bench stopped on the dot. Everybody stared at the new one that had arrived. Their usual expressionlessness now seemed a little eerie.

They exchanged gazes with hidden meaning, then all as one lifted up a desk and a chair and threw them before the commuting fairy. Desks falling suddenly before his eyes made the fairy, startled, look up at the bench.

The apparent leader of the fifteen said this.

"That there's your seat, how's about?"

They had begun bullying!

"...ah, sure."

Having seemingly understood he had been subjected to cruelty, the fairy in the end slumped his shoulders and retraced his steps.

"It feels like an unbelievable scene has unfolded..."

I had witnessed the negative bequest of humans on par with nuclear weapons / discrimination / dictatorship, bullying.

The fairies had inherited that, incredible.

"...bullying?"

"Yes indeed."

"Not the usual imitative game?"

"Even if it was imitation, their ability to understand the principle may be a problem, I am wondering."

Not looking very interested, Grandfather stuck his finger in the bundle of documents and notebooks piled on his desk and,

"With only one example there's not much I can say, but... a report's just come in. Have a read."

He extracted one sheet from the mountain of documents and tossed it at me. It was a copy of

a formal report.

"...the fairy population...?"

"Seems to be increasing. And rapidly. And the main topic ain't that... try looking."

The distribution of fairies was color coded on the world map recorded on the document.

Generally, these went so that the degree increased from cold colors to warm colors.

There was only one point that had become bright red.

"...this is here, is it not."

Our Kusunoki Village had become the world's foremost area for fairy population density.

"That's right, the fairy density's become high just in this village. I wonder who's to blame?"

"Grandfather. Should you not say 'who is to thank' in that situation?"

"No, that was right. I don't think this unbalanced increase is beneficial for them. If this turns out to be an increase in population due to excessive meddling, that'd be one serious responsibility."

"What do you mean when you say that it is not beneficial?"

"There's stress for example, there's gotta be lots of problems."

"Are there, really..."

"I wonder, now..."

That was something that I, as well, did not readily know.

"Regardless, it's no mistake that the population has increased several dozen times in a few months."

Told, I returned my gaze to the document. The value of the previous year was not printed, so I could not tell the authenticity of Grandfather's assertion.

"Could it be an overstatement to say several dozen times?"

"In the same investigation several years ago, this area was blue, you know? And look at it. It's now bright red, ain't it."

"Mmmh."

"What do you think the cause of that is?"

Maybe it was me, that is right...

At the very least, I had not heard of Mediators in other lands distributing sweets like it was a daily Halloween.

"That causal relationship's still not been caught, but... when I saw this my stomach froze a little."

"It is normally impossible to tell that population distribution would become unbalanced due to sweets, right."

"It'll be bad if it's found out. That's in the category of stuff that needs investigating, so we can't avoid looking around."

"We?"

"Yeah, well, you."

"....."

It is in the category of Requires Investigating and it will be bad if it is found out, so what was this about, tossing everything on a subordinate?

"So I am forced to investigate why the fairies are gathering while concealing that the fairies are gathering due to me?"

"That's how it's gonna be. So, yeah... I thought that thing had also been delivered to the Office... where is it?"

Grandfather again pushed his way through the piled towers of documents with his fingers, one of which in the end collapsed, and like dominoes they fell one after another, making a

mess around them, but he did not care one whit and in the end discovered one letter.

"There it was, there. Have a read."

On the front of the envelope there was something written.

"What is this?"

"It means it's a direct appeal."

"Bwah..."

I could easily imagine who was the sender, but still I unfolded the stationary and read.

"The world is a concrete jungle. Bonds are breaking, hearts are thirsty. Drinking hot chocolate restores the lost humidity, but recently that's been put on hold, right? We got chapped skin here, and it won't stop. We're tired, and we wish to emigrate. We feel like we want to go somewhere far away. The sender, us."

"...why would they send an actual letter to the Office?"

There should be nothing restraining the fairies. They should be able to freely go wherever they wish.

"That's an SOS, ain't it. The unconscious scream from strong stress took this shape."

"Please do not say scary things."

Awww, but thinking carefully, this might be true...

After seeing bullies, I could not quite laugh away an image of negativity.

"There seems to be a number of fairies who wish to get away. If things go well, this could be a stimulant. And so I thought about it."

"Tell me."

"I got a good idea. Will you do anything it takes?"

"I will."

Grandfather laid a finger on a point on the map.

"This here's an area where nearly no fairies live, right."

"That should be correct."

On the map, the distance from the Village was of several centimeters. However, it was no location that could be reached by walking.

If we were thinking of moving there, we will have to have the caravan group let us ride along.

The wheeled vehicles used by the traders, and not just the Salvation Army, were trucks powered by solar power generation.

As at present it was nearly impossible to lay hand on fuel, so they only moved via solar power, however, as obvious, at horribly slow speeds, and on top of that they had to stop during the night. Having the caravans let us ride meant to resolve to a voyage that was generally fairly long, that was what it was going to be.

When on the spot there was no private room to be given, and as you have to sit on the load tray, the more the daily schedule increased, the more bothersome the thing got, you see.

However, as a low ranking member of the Mediators, I could not renounce a business trip if necessary... even I had the resolve to that.

Grandfather also said this.

"You're going to be transferred here. And for years, I suspect."

"I refuse."

I replied with swiftness in comma one second.

And of course, that was vetoed.



"...this is going to be miserable."

After that, Grandfather, who in his land was more or less a celebrity, put his skills into action. We promptly got our hands on the caravan, I was loaded on like cargo, and soon I was going to be made to clatter and shake as I headed towards my distant destination.

On a loading tray.

As a larger caravan there should have been passenger seats, but I was on the loading tray. This was so I could be on the same side as the fairies, who were treated as luggage, and therefore I could not be carried in a passenger seat.

"And still, a business trip..."

In practice it was an exile, was it not. What a thing to happen.

Whatever else, this voyage had no set end term. This will not end until I have fulfilled my business obligations. I had no idea when that will happen. This was nonsense.

I shall now once again explain the objective of our voyage here.

From Grandfather's plan, there were mainly two objectives I had to fulfill.

By temporarily getting me, the cause of the population explosion, away from the Village, the population of fairies was expected to disperse. This was the first one.

By taking under charge the fairies who wished for emigration (?), I was to deal with them until they found a place to rest. This was the second.

In particular, concerning the second, as there was a warm reception among those wishing to leave the Village, they were promised the most favorable treatment possible. That consisted just of me accompanying them, however.

In short I was the conductor, the ambassador, the representative, the handywoman, and the babysitter. Whether this was a promotion or a demotion I could not tell.

Happily, or rather a good thing was, a dwelling was easily secured.

As in the land in which we were emigrating there were countless empty houses that could make for acceptable dwellings, so we did not need to worry about a roof and walls. Also, we were going to receive assistance from the farmers of the land, so, as it has been until now, there was going to be no worry about food either.

As the result of a collation of my heart's checklist, I said it was good, and nodded.

- ☐ Is your life in danger?
- ☐ Do you have a home?
- ☐ Is your home's standard up to civilization? (It does not have straw roof or something?)
- ☐ Is food being provided?
- ☐ Is the water safe?
- ☐ Is it not some sort of historic ruin?

(Remaining 48 items snip'd.)

Humans had the right to live as humans, so when I turned that into a list and submitted it to Grandfather as terms for the business trip, he told me that they were all cleared.

But verbal promises were brittle. Until I had verified with my own eyes the actual situation on the site, I should not be ticking checkboxes.

"Mmmh, living alone..."

Sort of fun, sort of annoying.

Things moved much too quickly, my consciousness could not follow up to the situation, you see. Even now that I was in the middle of being cast out in a remote land my mood was that it was a joke.

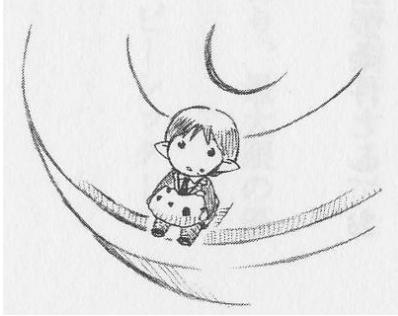
"...washroom."

I left the cargo car and headed for the toilet in the space between it and the passenger car. When I opened the door I found there was someone there before me. This was disgraceful.

"Ah! I apolo... gize..."

The person there before me had a height of about ten centimeters.

He was sitting down like a chair on the toilet seat he was not even using and was setting up shop on top of his lap.



"Now, really, what are you doing here."

"...master human."

The fairy bullied by the group while playing school was also the sender of that direct appeal. What he asserted was not just for us, it was unknowingly making the rounds among the fairies, and as a number of supporters appeared, that was how this emigrant group came to be formed.

To say it, he was the promoter.

That important pioneer was for some reason biting into a chocolate biscuit in the toilet.

"Why in the toilet?"

It was a clean toilet, but that was not the problem.

"I was bullied, so I'm having my lunch in the toilet?"

"Why?"

I seriously did not understand.

"Because that is the correct manners!"

"I have never heard that before."

"So you never have..."

The fairy left the toilet in low spirits. His back was bent in sadness.

"...it just keeps dragging, right, that depression."

As population saturates, it brings negative influence to the fairies: that was definitely what had happened.

Despondency dragging its long tail kept staying on top of them. It sealed away their usual cheerfulness, making them completely forget about it.

I wanted to hope that that would clear up in the new land.

And I also have one more thing to wish from this new land.

There was nothing to be done for the inconvenient lifestyle. Still, as far as adventures...

No matter what trouble may arise, may there at least be no adventures.

With the voyage of several days in the caravan over, the greetings to the farmers who had come to pick us up done, and after carrying the baggages to the temporary dwelling, I went to

see the lake.

I moved through a forest of hazel trees and the stuffy odor of grass to come to a lake shore, its surface wide like a stretched mirror.

The lake had a darkened, tattered pier, and there was one boat, flipped over, with nearly rotten boards.

The pier had also gotten old, but it had quite the sturdy construction. It creaked a little when walking it, but it did not feel like the bottom was ready to give out. The scene of the lake from here was particularly beautiful, and I liked it more and more.

On the opposite side of the lake there stood hills and fields, and the woods bordering the shore I saw as something that had poured from the blue sky into a basin in between the mountains to make the lake more beautiful.

Four islands big and small floated in the lake surface, and all of them were fully covered with well-grown green trees. Even the largest was a tiny island with a diameter of about a hundred meters. Therefore, no people lived there, and they had remained there without anyone laying a hand on them since their formation, no mistake.

This was a land with truly no sign of people.

It seemed only a few farmers were living here, and I spotted buildings standing in the middle of nowhere dotted around, little else, they did not have the appearance of a city.

The caravan also seemingly only visited them rarely, and if those who were living here at present were to vanish, the interference of people would completely leave the area and revolve back to the breast of nature... that was what this land was, you see.

A land with nothing but nature in it.

"This is a nice view."

It seemed I was going to find several things I had to be uneasy about in my life. I will first of all speak of what came to my eyes regardless.

"Will you drown yourself?"

A fairy jutted out his head from my pocket and said that.

"There's a lake!" "It's got islands!" "Sooo big!"

When one came out, the others also were unable to hold back and showed up. From my hair, hidden behind the nape, from beyond a tree trunk, from a gap in the thickets.

The members of the migrant troupe gathered in the blink of an eye.

"Please make sure you do not fall in the lake while you play, all right."

When I said that, the fairies all together sat cross-legged on the pier and began gazing at the lake.

"The sun is setting..."

While normally this scene would have them frolicking around, it was instead a swirl of the forlorn experiences of a life of sadness.

"There, you wanted to emigrate and all that, right? You got to be in spirits."

"Spirits..." "Where is anyone in spirits?" "Maybe if we get in the mood." "In spirits like Genki from Lemon-san?" "So we can't emigrate without being in good spirits?"

"Well, you call it emigration, but still," I chose words in an attempt to raise the spirits of this group sitting cross-legged from behind their backs. "It is because, well, you do not have a country. Will you make a country? You can make one, since there is no country here."

"Country...?"

One turned back.

"There is no human country, you see. That is because it seems nearly no one lives here. The farmers, too, live far away in a more open land, and if you leave them be, few humans will

even lay eyes on this lake during the years. In a land like that, someone has to build a country."

"Build a country?" "A country for fairy men?" "Who knows!" "Countries in the brain!"

It seemed I caught their interest a little.

"Ahhh, of course. How about you people create a new country just for you people?"

"A country for us?" "Only if it's a country for fairy men." "All new." "Might be nice."

One fairy stood, then another.

"Making a country. Is that not a good thing? If you made a country, what would you like to do?"

The fairies answered with sparkling eyes.

"Heavy taxes!" "Despotism!" "Domination!" "Oppression!"

"...the hearts you people have require healing, I see."

I wished for them to be influenced by the majesty of nature and avoid the negative. As amicably as possible, within boundaries that would not cause problems of responsibility, however.

"What country are we building?" "A good country." "A rich country." "A fun country." "A pleasant country." "A country for laughs." "A country that's not so bad."

The fairies had begun talking about the direction that the building of the country would take. It was a good trend.

As I was watching over them with a smiling mood, I did not notice that a creaking noise had come from the pier.

"Uhm, folks... is the pier not in fact floating?"

I spoke a question, but the shore was already several dozen meters away.

"That's true." "Stuff like this will happen." "Is it wandering?" "Time to be flexible." "So it was no good." "No good." "Nope, no good!"

The fairies again went negative... they fell into disappointment.

"The pier was rotten, then."

I already had the presentment of adventure.

"Master human, we have decided the name of the country."

"What? At this time?"

"No Good Country."

"That is no good, is it not."

"And so, we will soon sink and be lost among the seaweed," he said with vacant eyes.

"That is also no GOOD!"

That said, the pier slowly but steadily sank, and at that point my shoes were sinking in the water surface. I had no last hope but the abandoned boat.

That also appeared fairly rotten, however... I could not ask for too much.

Laboring hard from my unsteady foothold, I flipped the boat over. The pier had already sunk below the surface and the water had reached around my hips.

"I'm floating!"

"Seriously, how are you so carefree!"

I snatched at the fairies who were floating on the water without resistance and tossed them in the boat.

"There is no one else, right? This is everyone, right?"

Making sure of it, I then also climbed aboard. And there I lied exhausted.

"...so tired."

The water of a lake did have a beautiful image, but... it had more viscosity than I thought, and

that was bad indeed.

Though I had only drank a little, that seemingly caused my body to react in rejection, as something sour came up from my throat.

There were no oars, so I could not row and head for the shore. The boat was under the influence of the wind and the water, so as time passed it approached one of the small islands. "Guys," I declared this while hugging my wet and chilled body. "It appears that the land the country will be established on is that of this small island."

And that all said were the details of how we came to have an Island Start.

No baggage. No changes. No help. Nothing at all.

...got fairies (though disappointed).

"It is so cold."

If I wanted to lament it felt like I could complain about everything, but in the end the harshest thing was the cold.

"A-, are you not cold... you fairies?"

"Not beyond our hearts."

Them saying that with cutesy eyes worried me.

"Humans get cold. When they are wet they catch colds and then they die."

"Pickle? Are we in a pickle?"

"Yes, quite."

Excessive intervention was strictly forbidden. Those thankful words of Grandfather's came up... not. My heart was dominated by the word '*survive*'.

The fairies charged into an emergency conference.

"Oh what a mess!" "What're we gonna do!" "Are we lacking sincerity?" "If we don't do something..."

The conversation was initially at a speed which I could hear normally, but as the discussion grew heated it accelerated more and more, and in the end it had become like a squeaking fast-forwards (and the motions of their bodies also actually went into fast-forwards).

It was much too high-speed, so I could not understand what they were saying, but eventually their speaking ended, and they quickly scattered in the four directions like balsam seeds.

Two came back right away.

"I must say sorry to you, master human."

"Why are you apologizing?"

"We were thinking of preparing something amazing, but..." "We failed."

Where I was taken to there was in fact an open-air fire lit.

"My, I am thankful."

On my own strength, I was not quite sure whether I would be able to start a fire without tools. For them it was not quite a big job, it seemed, as while they threw dried branches on the fire, there were fairies who hung their heads and went, "it's just a fire...", "it's like coming out with raw meat at a high-class restaurant..."

"No, this much is just fine."

Ahhh, I was returning to life...

And then I directed my consciousness to the development that awaited. The first concern was the food.

Right then, four fairies returned with a leaf wrapping on their backs.

"...we tried preparing a delish meal, but." "We failed."

They untied what they were carrying, and nuts and mushrooms tumbled out.

"Are these edible?"

"There's no poison..." "Sorry it's not beef steak..." "We just picked these up..." "A lackluster job..."

The four were proudly discontented with their own job.

"That is not true, you know? I was just thinking about what to eat."

There was a fair amount of them. It seemed they would be enough for tonight and tomorrow.

"As long as we have fire and water and food, well, we sort of cleared the first step for survival, you see."

Although I complimented them, the rainy clouds sticking to above their heads did not clear away.

I caught warmth for a while, and when my clothes had for the most part dried, I decided to look around the island to secure an accurate understanding of the present situation.

This I had seen when looking at it from the lakeshore, but it was truly a small island. I walked just a little bit and in the blink of an eye arrived at the edge.

Four islands gathered on the surface of the lake's north side. It appeared the island on which I had drifted was the southmost one.

It was a long slender island that reminded me of a boat. Other than a bit of bared land on the prow, everywhere else there were dense trees. There had to be few things preying, as a large amount of tree berries were scattered about. I walked through their gaps and found a conspicuously larger oak tree also standing there, this attracted my curiosity as it seemed to be the sole and only one of its species on the island.

"There are no buildings, then."

A wholly uninhabited island.

The opposite shore was at a distance my eyes could reach. Someone who was quite good at swimming could cross it. Sad to say that to me it appeared impossible.

"Well now, what shall we do?"

The many troubles I had experienced since becoming a Mediator had fostered a survival instinct inside me. Thanks to that, I could remain on my feet without feeling depressed.

I resolutely pushed out my chest.

Seeing that, the fairies tugged at the hem of my skirt.

"Queen?"

Oh dear, I had taken up a post.

"Will master human become the queen?" "It's the making of a nation." "Waaah!" "So it's an island country?" "It's our chance for overwhelming diplomacy!"

It seemed that their Country Making Mood had swelled all at once.

I contemplated whether, in this reasonably dangerous situation, ascending to queen of the fairy country would constitute excessive intervention.

It was maybe all right. Borderline, but OK. That was the conclusion I reached.

After all, this was an emergency situation indeed. Reasonably so.

Just barely so, but still all right.

There were chestnuts that looked delicious among the tree berries, so I baked them and ate them.

Mmmh-mh, quite good indeed...

I tried eating the acorns just to see, but the bitterness was intense, so I concluded that they were not to be eaten. The potential of the chestnuts was brought to the fore.

I did not know how mushrooms should be eaten, so I stabbed them on a branch, scalded

them, and ate them.

But they did not quite have much flavor, so I could not quite manage to eat them.

After finishing the meal I had to think about where to sleep.

The temperature was low, and the ground was wet since we were right next to a water surface, so just laying down on it and sleeping seemed difficult.

I consulted with the fairies, and eight of them had shines in their heads as they sung "hey-ho, hey-ho!" and fled into the woods, however when they came back they had that cloud of depression to them and were completely melancholic.

"W-, what happened?"

"It was no good." "It was impossible." "We were at a numerical disadvantage?"

The eight came back after they had weaved rotten trees together into a container, bound it with vines, and heaped it up with dead leaves.

"Ah, yes, dead leaves are said to be warm."

"We only picked them up..." "There's nothing here at all..." "Are we incompetent?" "We're like unwanted children." "What a failure!" "Are we in a down period?"

"I can endure for tonight... no need to feel like that."

But the fairies lost their spirits and did nothing but feel all down.

Stress was terrifying, indeed.

"If you became happy, you could do all sorts of jobs, like in the past. What if you thought about fun things?"

"Fun things..."

The fairies dazedly thought about those.

"...dooown."

And then they failed.

"Awww, you will not be increasing at all, not by being like that. This is definitely serious."

Looked like there was nothing to heal it except for waiting.

"All things being the same, I do not mind residing here until you have healed..."

Why did humans, when their bellies are full and have a warm place to rest, have their reasoning powers dull and just renounce thinking, it was to wonder.

I simply thought that things would solve themselves in some way.

During the night I fed the fire, and once I slept on a bed of rotten trees with a blanket of dead leaves, I could avoid the wind blowing in at night from the lake surface.

When I felt a little cold, I only needed to pinch off a part of the blanket and feed it to the fire.

It was a so-so pleasant night, you know?

More importantly, however, if five or six months were to pass and the cold of high Winter were to visit us, this leisureness would become impossible.

When I woke up in the morning, I found that, on the tree hollow I used in the stead of pillow, there were leaves turned in the shape of bowl.

The vessel was filled with smooth water, and it was not the slimy water of the lake, it seemed they had gathered morning dew.

"The service at this hotel is quite nice, indeed!"

I called that to the fairies, who were somewhere on the island, and enjoyed one cup of water.

I baked the remaining chestnuts and mushrooms and ate them, and there my survival instincts bubbled back. According to my experience, this strength of heart was indispensable in order to survive in a harsh environment.

I set myself as straight as I could, then entered the woods. I had heard *thunk-thunk* hard

noises coming from the depths.

"Fairies?"

In a location that had become a job site, for some reason there was suddenly furniture laying there.

"Ahhh, madam queen!" "The queen has come!" "Will you look at us work?" "We want you to watch!" "It's just finished, but!" "Queen banzaai!"

The fairies were surrounding a piece of furniture and having the first high tension discussion in a long time.

"But what happened? Right from early morning... besides, what kind of piece of furniture is that?"

A representative casually answered.

"One we made."

That was like a fine, very fine display cabinet made by a skilled artisan.

"You made this thing from those trees?! In one night?"

"We should put some alcohol bottles in there or something."

A twisting curved design had been given to each section, its surface had refinement and elegance, a Queen Anne type after they had been given the refinement of Rococo.

Ornaments, to use an euphemism, utilized tiny pieces of different trees with the technique called veneering, replicating the leaf decorations said to be popular at the time.

Its four legs had refined waves, and while it left the impression of seventeenth century walnut furniture, the glass, the metal fixtures, and all those materials they could not get their hands on were elegantly simplified, and as a result created an exquisite balance. It was hard to say that it came from the fairies, who had no civilizational ingenuity. Even allowing for that, it was an exquisite work of art, it was evidently a work of craftsmen that deserved recognition. A marvelous undertaking. But, that said.

"If you have to make something like this, then make me a beeed!"

"Eeek!" "Ayyyhn!" "Piii!" "Awmh!"

"Maybe there is a meaning in making things?"

*There is a meaning in undertaking a challenge. There is a significance to participating.* Those were words of admonition that certainly existed. Humans, what would they do if they only chased results? But that said.

"Just for now that is not acceptable!"

"Hyyyhn!"

The fairies took the tongue-lashing and scattered in every which direction.

"Just when I thought you were finally in the mood... you make this useless thing..."

What did they think they were doing, putting a cabinet on an uninhabited island. That was what I wanted to ask. Just, although not the product of supertechnology, it was as always a product of skilled engineering.

This much productivity in one night by eight of them...

"I see, it is because they used trees... what if they made a raft and we could escape."

A raft should really not take much craft, and if it went well, tonight I might go back to being a couch potato.

Past noon, the fairies were having a discussion in between the trees, and as I approached to request them make a raft, I found that, why, did their population not just increase.

"Are you people still having fun?"

"Are we?" "I wonder?" "It's not good, but!" "It's not bad either!" "Finishing a job makes us feel



nice!"

I expected them to total eight, but they had become twelve.

Uh-huh, now then, after making that furniture they for the time being had recovered their motivation, I see.

"Madam queen, we would like to consult with you."

"I shall hear," I encouraged them with words in the style of a queen.

"We have registered this island as being to our liking."

"And what does it mean, that you like it?"

"That we're committed to it."

Maybe I should give up, maybe I should laugh it off.

The chestnuts were likely the island's tastier food. Mushrooms and acorns with no flavor, as well as those other tree berries whose names I did not know, did not quite suit my appetite.

I used the tree bed in the stead of a cart to gather chestnuts, bringing them back to that prow cape.

I did not leave the fire lit to ensure it would not expand to the trees. However, a problematic thing that I remembered was that I could not start a fire of my own strength.

"And so, dear fairy. Please make me a lighter."

"Right-oh!"

"You cannot do it?"

"What are you saying, madam," the fairy averted his eyes. "...we can indeed make one."

"About how long will it take?"

"Now thaaat, huh. If you have around five hours."

"That is too long... in three minutes, if you please."

I believed they could manage it.

"...do you need it right away?"

"Exactly, even right away. It is going to get cold soon."

The fairy went 'ngh' as he bit his lips and vanished in between the trees.

"We made it and very well!"

Three minutes later I was supplied with a lighter.

"B-, but this is...!"

It was certainly a proximate item, one that could not be called anything but a lighter. It was small (one-hand size), and could light a fire anywhere. The terms had been fulfilled.

"...my, it is a fine lighter indeed."

Excluding the fact that it was a mostly primitive bow drill type, that being said. To supplement, a bow drill fire starting device is used by moving back and forth the flexed branch bow attached to a string, causing friction and starting the fire.

It was no more than seven-eight centimeters long, it was lighter sized.

"Stone Age quality means tears..."

I stood a pole vertically on a dried board and tried using the bow. It was tiny so I was worried whether I could actually use it, but within not even a minute the board was whittled away, smoke rose, and the fire was lit.

"Ohhh, marvelous. Quite simple, indeed."

Its development, while rudimentary, still made it a Fairy Tool. The way the bow was wound to the string was oddly complicated, and it certainly had some trick to it that made it so that even the tiniest strength would develop a strong rotation.

"...this is embarrassing."

The fairies were embarrassed by their primitive work and shuddered.

"By the way, what are you building over there?"

Here and there on the island trees were being felled and fairies were running about.

"Well, a water treatment plant, waterworks, and a flush toilet?"

"How advanced!"

I might be thankful for a flush toilet, though. No matter how much of a survivor I was.

"Ahhh, this is mighty fine. I will happily leave it all to you."

"This is our comeback match, you see."

Today's humiliation will become tomorrow's power to live—

The toilet was not yet ready even as night fell, but in its stead, a canopy bed was prepared.

"But there is no blanket, only dry leaves."

"Soorryyy..."

"Please do not worry about it. I am not going to ask for the impossible."

"But that is not the impossible."

"...did you just say that was not impossible, right there?"

"We got time."

"But you right in the middle of making waterways and all that, you are busy..."

"There's lots of people over there. We got lots with nothing to do."

"I see..."

Now that he said it, I had a feeling that the number of fairies had increased significantly on just this day.

"Like that, me too, I was unemployed."

"My... what a naughty child you are."

"KyahFuh!"

The fairies, his forehead poked, flipped face up. I scratched a finger on his belly and he squirmed intensely, emitted a weird voice and kicked like a cat. However, unlike a cat he immediately gave up and fell down flat, sort of like asking to be killed already.

"And so, for the glory of the nation, I am doing my best?"

If the waterway was a national enterprise, then this fairy had to be in the private sector, I see.

"And that is why you made me a bed, then."

"My opinion was that it was an important thing, so I made it."

"Bed aside, is the blanket not also pretty important?"

"...is it?"

"What are you going to be making after the bed?"

"Something that is super very important?"

"Hummm, like a bathtub?"

"Nope!"

"A house? Clothes so I can change?"

"Nope!"

I could not think of anything anymore.

It was not poverty of imagination, it was because there was nothing more important than a bed than what I had brought up.

"Not a house nor water nor a blanket... now what would it be, I do not know. Ah, I know, food, right?"

"That is also a great big miss, you know?"

"Then what is the answer?"

The fairy tossed this out with an all too natural face.

"A massage chair!"

I pinched the fairy by his nape and dangled him.

"There is no electricity, you know, even if you made that."

"It will be hand-cranked..."

"It is a chair for relaxing, using a hand crank will be just tiring, will it not!"

"You should just operate that massage chair until you faint, so..."

"Why fainting?"

"Normally you faint when you are massaged?"

"What are you, some ticklish little child?"

He tilted his head and did not show a trace of understanding.

"Anyway, I do not need a massage chair. We are skipping that, as I wish for something more important."

"Then next I'll make something super important."

"Anything is more important than a massage chair, you see. Please listen to me."

"A humidifier."

"We are on a lake shore."

It was already more than humid enough.

The grass and the trees over there had already their surfaces moistened by morning dew.

"Even for the sake of argument you wanted to make a humidifier, a house would of course come first."

"Do you prefer that?"

"Prefer it, not prefer it... what kind of way of giving importance is that?"

"Ah, I have a checklist?"

The fairy hopped down and dragged a stone slab hidden in the trees. They were tiny, but they had power comparable to beetles. It was just that, were they to fight beetles, they would lose one hundred percent of the time, however.

The stone slab in question had this on it.

- Things to invent (make from the most important thing on down)

- Bed

- Massage chair

- Humidifier

- Elastic bands

- Rube Goldberg machine

- Football

(Remaining several dozen items snip.)

He was in the mood to make whatever he wanted to make indeed, this guy.

"So religion is an invention... I did not know that, I will remember. These are all vetoed."

"Eeek!"

The fairy twitched and squirmed in the pleasure of having his plans of action he worked so hard for squished basically out of nowhere.

"Just please make me a blanket."

"To make a blanket we gotta research textile technology..."

"Then do that."

The fairy faltered with an 'ah...', showing some hesitation in making the blanket, but he quickly seemed to have struck on something good. With a tone like it was something quite wonderful, and wondering why he did not think of it right away, he said this.

"If we make it a talking blanket, won't it be a little better?"

On the morning of the third day adrift, I had a refreshing (if hallucinatory) waking after having a dream of taking a pleasant shower.

"Bwaaah, all the islands... all the stranded people!"

During sleep my sense of being at home returned, so every time I woke up I got a little shock. I felt pain from how my body was all sticky, and I also felt hurt from how I laid down covered in dried leaves. I was being naive.

And still it was just for the period of survival, so I activated my heart's device for giving up on everything, and my normal morning presence of mind returned at last.

"Will one of the farmers not discover us, I wonder."

And, although I uttered that, I accepted that that was a faint hope.

The farmers would indeed accommodate us with food and other things, but the contract was such that I was the one to inquire with them when I had need.

"Now then, how are the fairies doing... I see."

I cleaned myself up as far as I could, passed through the door and went to the woods—

"Ah, a door!"

It was a wooden door that had the shine of having been just whittled down.

There were also walls. There were walls that faced north and south, they had window frames although they had no glass windows, and there was even a floor. There were still no walls on the east and west, so I could easily see the chilly lake surface.

There was no roof either. If rain were to fall, the inside of the room would be soaked through.

"They managed almost half of a house in one night..."

With no roof and lacking two walls, it was made like a dollhouse that children would play with, however.

"Good morning, madam queen!"

One of the fairies, carrying a pencil-sized piece of wood, passed past at my feet.

"Good morning. What is this house about?"

"We built it!"

"You... are a new entry, right?"

"Right some time after birth?"

So young...

As waterway construction and textile research proceeded at a high speed, willpower seemingly bred good mood, and the fairies once again increased significantly.

Fairies were running about here and there on the tiny island. Population seemed to have increased to several dozens. No, maybe several hundreds...

"This is the water purification plant, see?"

It had already been completed.

"An unexpectedly cozy facility, indeed."

It was a reservoir demarcated like a fish pen facing the shore of the lake. It had a drum can they had picked up in the stead of a tank, and the fairies were busily bringing back and forth miniature bottles made of wood.

"We did our best and cleaned up the lake water!," went the water treatment facility fairy.

"Hoh hoh."

"It's gonna deliver lots!"

He pointed at the ground. It seemed they had installed buried pipes.

"I see."

"Of that moisturizing ingredient, and to all the country!"

"Except, beyond my house you do not use water...?"

Without agreeing or disagreeing, the fairy wordlessly smiled brightly.

On the way back, I discovered the area where the logged trees were being set aside as lumber.

It had become a central square, and even there there were fairies working in a hurry.

"What is that for?"

"It's the queen!" "Have a very pleasant day!" "This is a cultivated field, see?"

"It would be nice if you could cultivate some kaiware sprouts."

"We're trying to do all sorts of things!"

That section seemed to be growing quite quickly.

Having finished surveying this much, I had no more things to do. Without the trees, the place was sized such that I could have a completely view of it.

"Boredom... so that is the enemy, this time."

As I was returning to the house, my feet stepped on something hard. I thought it a tree root, but what was it if not a wooden train line.

"Stop signal receeeived!"

There was a fairy dressed like a train conductor on the tiny locomotive running on the tiny train line.

From locomotive to freight cars, the train was entirely made of wooden building blocks.

"Dear me, I am sorry."

"The queen is untouchable!"

"What kind of motive power is this operating on?"

The train conductor looked dejected.

"...manpower."

"Pushed by hand, is it?"

So it was not springs and not elastic band powered, it was a simple hand-pushed toy, then.

Now that I say it, elastic bands had still not been developed.

"It's disappointing, sorry."

"Does the line make the rounds of the island?"

"Aye. It makes the round all around!"

"It really moves for being hand-pushed."

"Ahhh, that's, it's, this, and that."

The fairy's explanation was extremely hard to understand, but the summary was this. (With some means) they reduced friction to its limits, a trick that made it run smoothly even though it was hand pushed, that was how it was.

"...for some reason, I have a feeling like that is the technology you should be most proud of."

"Anybody can do it..."

"Humans would not be able to do it so easily, however."

"I just have a little request."

"For whom."

"For an event."

I could not quite understand, so my thinking stopped.

A consultation about an event?

Even I, who understood this thing of them deeply, had many many things I still did not understand.

"...we're so powerless, and we're so weak, but you won't abandon us, right?"

"I will not abandon you, I will not."

Given it is my job, were the further words that I pushed back into my stomach.

"So please, get going. Excuse me for being in the way, all right."

"Aye! Departure ahead!"

He had a mood to him like he had a Gloom Cloud following him, but he was quickly released from it.

However, the building block train did not move.

"...if you don't push it, it won't work."

"Fine, fine."

How much strength should I have pushed it with...?

I tried giving a slight push forwards to the last carriage and the train slid forwards without impediments like it was on ice.

And then it continued forwards at a safe speed without any sign it would stop.

"Ladies and gentlemen, next stop is over there, over there. Following station stops are there, in there, in here, over here, and the final stop is going to be here!"

The train ran inexplicably smoothly within the dim group of trees.

"This is getting more and more like it, is it not!"

It was a good thing that they had secured basic infrastructure.

As resources on the island were scarce, the fairies seemed to be in difficulty, however... given they had done this much, even I felt relief.

As I returned to the house, I happened on a lumbering area that differed from the one before.

In the square that had been created, a large bungalow was being constructed.

The fairy that seemed to be the manager in charge, wearing a (wooden) helmet, came by to explain.

"Have a very marmeladay!"

"Yes, yes."

"This is tentatively to be the power generation research facility?"

"You can ask me, but..." It was their usual thing. "So this is going to be a power plant."

"Tentatively ."

There were around thirty fairies working just in this place.

They were hopping and bouncing around with tremendous speed, and the building was being assembled with a speed like the scene was in fast-forwards.

"There is nothing to use electricity for but, well, do as you please. I will allow it."

"We were given permission by the queen..." "The royal go sign!" "We will have a royal spirit to do this!" "Royal happiness!" "Royal thankfulness!"

"That aside, you people over there, setting aside what to use it for, what kind of means do you believe you will be generating power with?"

I tried talking a bit royally.

The supervisor answered while averting his eyes.

"Atomic power."

"Because you are generating power in very small quantities?"

The fairy nodded firmly.

"Because if you are saying you are generating power using the atom I will give my royal stop."

The fairies whispered at each other.

"That was close!" "Nuclear power would've been silly!" "Good thing we didn't do it!" "Because that would've been simple!" "But dirty?" "Yup." "It will make stuff dirty!" "Nuclear fission, right!"

"Even as far as funness, dry ice is better!" "I wanna throw dry ice in boiling water!"

Looks like we were cutting it close...

"Generating power in very small quantities. That is fine, is it not. You people truly need to learn the virtues of simplicity, indeed."

"Yes..."

"As far as generating power in small quantities goes, do go ahead. I would very kindly require you do not lay hands on thermal power, geothermal energy, or nuclear power, if you please."

"As you command, madam queen!"

"Very well."

And with all that, when I returned from my walk, why, the house was complete.

It was a very simple log cabin, small given how it related to its grounds, but a tiny house on the lake shore was right how it should have been, or so the part of my maiden's soul that had still not been whittled away thought.

"My, my, what a very well done log cabin indeed, everyone, excellently done!"

"...next time we'll win." "...embarrassing..." "...it's a slapshod job." "...it's just a house." "...a teensy house." "...it's cheap like chopsticks."

The carpenter fairies were all feeling disappointed.

"This again?"

And that aside, that was quite the detailed log cabin indeed, this one.

What differed from normal log cabins was that it utilized logs cut to fairy pencil size.

Looked at in more detail, it had finishing touches that did not look possible from a log construction, at least when seen from a distance. The parts I thought curves were in actuality detailed compositions of hollows and bumps, and the triangular roof had actually a countless number of tiny steps... it was interesting like dot drawn digital art, it excited me just looking at it.

"A veranda would be nice. It would make it closer to the era of the Far West."

In this sort of entrance and adjacent veranda there would be a bench and a rocking chair, and in them there would sit a drunken old man and an old lady focused on knitting.

"Now then, show me the inside."

"Aye, come in, come in."

I set a fairy on my shoulder and passed through the door.

"This is the common room."

It was a room about the size of my own room at the Village.

At the center was a plain wooden dining table. And a chair of the same color. That cabinet from before was there, seemingly used in the stead of tableware shelf.

This could certainly be used as a living room, but even if a mere four people were to come in it would certainly be cramped. Certainly, I did not expected four humans to come visit, however.

"Our store gives furniture free?"

Leading into the kitchen, there was a wooden oven ostentatiously making its presence felt.

A wooden oven—

"Is this thing safe?"

"Whatty what what?"

"The oven. If I lit a fire... would it not burn?"

"It will burn."

And I got answered so readily!

"This is useless, is it not."

"You can enjoy the thrill... or you can enjoy it for its looks..."

"So even you fairies, without iron, are limited in the things you can do."

"...gloom!" and the fairy was instantly clad in a cloud of depression.

The Gloom Cloud trait had seemingly duplicated in the entire group, as anyone could manifest it.

"So, the bedroom is this way."

Even that depression forgotten in a few seconds, the fairy guided me towards the bedroom.

"A tiny bedroom to have."

The bed had already been carried there, but that was all. The room was so small it could not fit a closet, there was nothing that could be done there but sleep, wake up, and head for the exit.

"It's a Japanese house as tiny as a rabbit hutch, sorry..."

"I do not require an extravagant bedroom to live on the island. I actually prefer this," I declared clearly, and returned to the living room. "So, what about this door?"

"Ah, that's the toilet."

The last door in the living room came to be the toilet & bathroom & washroom.

"My, so new age."

The toilet could be flushed.

The bathroom came with a shower.

The washroom's tap could be removed and used as a hand shower.

"Even the bellows of the hose of the hand shower are made of wood."

"They will rot within a year."

"Well, they are used to carry water, so..."

"Wanna try the flush toilet?"

"Yes, if I get the chance."

I was completely satisfied in how the house had come out.

I tried the shower immediately, and regardless of how it only used cold water, I felt emotionally moved. Whatever else, it was purified water that did not stink of rot, it was potable water.

My thankfulness for the wall blocking outside view was also great, all else aside there was culture in a toilet. It was a sublime thing. It rescued people from the most miserable of moods. Humans were creatures that had to have rooms. I also had to accept my own withdrawn, indoor person self and spoil it.

"Madam queen, we present you your item!"

At night, the blanket I was eagerly expecting was delivered.

It was extremely thin, and despite that warm, a cloth with a smooth texture to it. Its glossy surface shone like it was wet, and entangling my fingers with it, it adapted to the skin like it was made of powder, it had been created with a material that had a mysterious feeling to it.

"If used to make a gown, this would slide off without you even noticing."

"Very well said!" and a fairy held up a container with a gown of the same material in it. "This here is that strippity strippity gown!"

"I have kindred spirits with that king who had no clothes, I see."

"Come on, take it off right away!"

"Are these joke clothes?"

Her majesty the queen requests articles for everyday use, understood.

"This, do you not have a change of clothes or underwear?"

"Without fail!"



Clothes and underwear were offered.

They were not much different from what I usually wore, and I could wear them without resistance.

"These will not come off without you noticing, right?"

"Sad to say... these are normal clothes."

I would rather say that to me these were items to be happily welcomed, indeed.

"This is very much fine. Thank you, mister fairy."

"Speak frankly, we can always make those very precious... shredder scissors, you know?"

I would rather spread around my personal information, however. Telling others that I was stranded here.

"By the way, these clothes, what material are they made of?"

"Spiders."

I nearly shouted out loud and tossed them away.

"S-, spiders? Spiders?!"

"Spider silk, right."



Looks like these were clothes made by knitting spider silk.

"I would soooort of find that unacceptable or rather I would be all too much opposed to this..."

"But normal silk is also from larvas?"

"Mgh."

Now that he said it, that was true.

Silk was taken from the cocoon that the silkworms, the larvas of moths, make.

"Larvas, spiders. Both are the same, right?"

"Normal silk I inexplicably do not have opposition towards, I wonder why..."

"All of them, both of them, are living and insects!"

"Spider silk... ngggh..."

I was conflicted by my feelings being disgusted while my reason was fine.

"Well, since a change of clothes is necessary..."

Fine, it was all fine.

Fine, it was all fine, fine.

"Then, since it is all fine..."

The fairy's head came to peek in.

"...did you just lie to yourself?"

"Please do not poke into this!"

The new fairy nation was developing steadily.

Trees were being logged, land was being developed, and the group of facilities with my house in the center were beginning to stand out. The water treatment plant, the power plant (scheduled), farms of all kinds, the transportation network (trains)... from fences to buildings

to all the facilities, everything was wooden.

The impression was that of having an unbroken view of a country of building blocks.

Despite this much development, I could not spot the residence of the fairies, so it appeared they were hiding in the remaining thickets.

"Looking at this, it is like these facilities are all just for me, the one they treat as queen."

And every time I thought that, no matter what I did, a dodgy smile appeared on my lips.

Though I so wanted to escape this island, I felt something like fondness for it now that I had clothes, food, and residence ensured, and I could watch its development proceed every day.

The speed of the development of the fairy city was controlled by the available resources, that did not seem to be mistaken.

I saw them as being able to create something from nothing like magic, but, of course, even they could do nothing but physically follow discretion in an environment with limits.

"That all being said, this is very much haphazard."

Their civilization, advancing more leisurely than always, still had more than enough charm to make me want to watch over it for a little bit more.

By the time the chestnuts I had gathered had finally started to run out, I was once again possessed with melancholy.

With the chestnuts gone, those mushrooms with a sad flavor (I cannot express it in any other way) will at long last become my main food.

This was a serious situation. Your queen was anxious indeed, my dear fairies.

...while I did not recall issuing that edict, I did make arrangements regarding the food problems.

The fairy working as Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries came and made his report.

"Madam queen, we have a report."

"I shall have it."

"We finally finished it!"

I rose from my throne (which had been installed in the square).

"Finished indeed, then."

The product presented to her majesty the queen, who was eagerly awaiting for it, was... a pineapple.

"...small, is it not."

The pineapple test product number one was nothing more than a hand's worth.

"You won't eat it?"

"Exactly. The size is not the problem. What matters is..."

I held the divine fruit to the heavens.

"Electric power."

Having downloaded the genetic information from who knows where, the fairies could obtain existing plants and improve them as well as recombine them in the blink of an eye.

Truly a magic that only the fairies could use.

Even this pineapple was one of the products of this bold research of theirs.

"The fruit itself may be small, but you really did well in breeding them to this point in this short a period of time (it was in fact a few days)."

"We used secret techniques, you know?"

The fairies, always making nonsense despite being capable of manipulating physics.

"How is the electric power?"

"It completely satisfies all of your demands!," he shouted while hopping.

"Then I would please like you to continue on this matter. Having electricity would be convenient in many ways."

"We're progressing right onwards!"

Pineapple power generation:

the seed for this concept came from a memory of when I was a child, when Grandfather and I ate together a pineapple he gave me.

*"Say, Grandfather."*

*"What."*

*"When eating the pineapple, my tongue feels all tingly...?"*

*"That's because electricity is coursing through it."*

*"?!"*

When I was about eight I just believed that, you see. I even told others about it.

I had embarrassed myself in front of a large number of people♪.

That said, the idea became the source, and main research has begun.

On the way... there may or there may not have been many difficulties.

Anyway, the research bore fruit and the first trial product was completed.

Whether the fairies modified its genetic structure or used a much different means was unclear.

"It's a nuance?" "Going along?" "Fighting spirit?" "What if it's momentum?"

They themselves seemed to not quite understand it, so being bothered by it was uncouth. For now there was nothing but pineapple.

If we can use at least one as a battery, then leaving the others planted to be used as power generators was going to be more efficient. The setup was so that we could use the pineapples' underground stems as they were for power lines.

Dynamo Pineapple, Dynapple.

Ah, right, right, the reason why the tongue tingles when eating pineapple is said to be because it has enzymes that dissolve proteins. It had nothing to do with electricity to begin with♪.

...as long as the fairies went along with the job, that was fine. To properly guide them, this sort of attention to fun was necessary.

"How long is it going to take before you cultivate pineapples in large enough quantities to achieve power generation?"

"...it will take eight hours."

"That will have to be six hours. I will not wait any longer than that."

That was because in six hours it was going to be night.

"Got it. We'll go full power."

And so it was that, six hours later, lights turned on in the palace-cabin where the queen resided.

How did they manage the lightbulbs?

They used electric tubes. Electric tubes indicate the Edison Bamboo, developed by a different research division, cleanly cut into sections.

It is famous that, when Edison made the lightbulb practical, he used bamboo charcoal, but the Edison Bamboo was cultivated to have the characteristics of incandescent bulbs from the start. Once their electrodes were stimulated it immediately lit up, and no household should be

without Edison Bamboo.

Also, now that electricity had come, I could also come to use hot water.

"Walls, ceiling, toilet, shower, lighting..."

This here was civilized living.

"Since we actually have lighting, it would be much better if I had something to read."

"As you order, madam queen!"

One fairy appeared holding a stone slate of tiny size.

This was engraved on it.

"There were humans. There were fairies. There were also many other things. ...what is this?"

"A literary work."

"Uh-huh."

"Then have this too," and another stone slate appeared."

"The Earth revolves. Indomitably, Mars also revolved. What a mess!"

"...how was it?"

"It was no good."

"AwWah, it was no good..." and the fairy went back crying.

Was that a lack of creativity?

They managed all that off-beat stuff almost casually, but as soon as it came to things like these they became unskilled, it was bizarre.

"Might be that their parameters are entirely unbalanced towards scientific skills."

And still stone slabs made for quite the interior decoration, so I decided to put them in the cabinet.

In the next night, the island came to be visited by a massive technological revolution.

It was a refreshing morning.

How it was different from the usual I understood as soon as I came out to the veranda and inhaled.

My first impression was that the wind of Spring was blowing through on this solitary island where the smell of water from the lake was normally fairly strong. The scent of vivid fresh sprouts, the scent of fresh leaves, the fragrance that flowers that bloom in Autumn emit. All of those things were at once in the scent of the island, and they smelled sweet.

The scene had once again changed entirely.

The wooden city was covered by countless plants.

The majority were plants developed by the fairies, so the island had now advanced into the stage of Plant Civilization.

"Howdy and good morning, madam queen!"

The fairies were making a line in front of the house. Each of them had the plants that they had developed in a pot in their arms. I could not see the end of the line. It was far in the distance.

"What a long line. If I may infer the goal for this royal audience... it is those plants, correct?"

"Came for patent application!" "New product, new product!" "I just finished it!" "I want you to see!"

And so it was that the fairies' island civilization entered its Fever Period.

Several days later—

"Whew."

The morning of the queen began with one cup of milk.

"Madam queen, your first coconut milk of the morning?"

The chamberlain fairy reverently offered me a hollow tree fruit from the side of my bed. These were milk coconuts. Not coconut milk, understood? It was a modified plant. The upper part was already removed, and using the straw grass I could drink its contents directly.

"I shall have it."

Inside it was like cow milk.

It was fine to drink on its own, it was fine to put in coffee, it was fine even to use to make sweets.

It was a convenient plant.

"How will your breakfast be?"

"Today is going to be another busy day, so I would like a full course breakfast."

"Aye aye sah!"

I had ordered not a plain menu with no usage of heat, but a proper morning meal.

In the oven space in the kitchen, water was being boiled in the pot-like leaves of a modified pitcher plant, a rootser plant. Rootser plants were one of the most popular and unmissable cooking ingredients of our island.

"The morning drink... right, indeed, this morning I would like some coffee."

"Your order is received!"

The chamberlain bowed his head and departed the bedroom.

After finishing cleaning up, and by the time I had finished changing into my proper attire for a queen, preparations for breakfast were done.

"Hot coffee!"

"Thank you."

Oooh, coffee!

Tea was fine, but lately I have been liking coffee. It was exceptional to have this drink in the morning, conversely tea felt much tastier to have in the afternoon.

"May I have a lump of sugar?"

"Yes, your highness!"

What he carried in was a hollowed sugar lump daikon.

It was a modified sugar daikon, with crystallized squared sugars on its swelled root. He handed me the root, and as it was full of nicely squared sugar lumps, I dropped one into the coffee.

Right, right, the coffee. This was not extracted from coffee beans. Tea and coffee had their manufacturing formulas wholly reversed.

"Your majesty, look at today's tea seeds!"

A farmer fairy came to show me the tea seeds freshly harvested from the Tea Tree.

This was just the appropriate moment for an explanation.

When someone thought about producing coffee and tea on the island, they thought that both of them had to be boring if left as-was, no mistake. As a result, tea seeds are gathered from the Tea Tree (they can also be roasted), and coffee was a drink extracted from coffee leaves, that was how they came to be.

The flavors were wholly the same.

Moka, darjeeling, kilimanjaro, earl gray, all of them, all of them were identical to the originals.

"...but that is fine. It is delicious."

And so, by the time I had finished drinking a cup, the dining table began being packed full of food.

The waiter fairies moved around without rest, discussing in detail how to deliver plates and lay

out the tableware.

While I waited for the hot dishes to be carried in, I ate cereals and yogurts and the fruits piled like a mountain. I even had some oatmeal with sliced banana in it.

Oatmeal was ordinarily made from boiling oats into a porridge, but on our island it was a little bit different.

That was because the oat harvested on the island, while it was oat, was all Automatic Wheat. This Wheat, which included a large amount of water and certain types of chemical substances, began emitting heat when exposed to the air after threshing, which operated with its water content and percolated it. As a result of this mechanism, when left there for ten minutes, the porridge came to be made automatically.

As it of course popped off automatically even though threshed, it was in fact necessary to seal it in vacuum packs quickly after harvesting. If this Fully Automatic Wheat was left exposed to the air after harvest, it would carry out threshing / heating / cooking on its own, and also make the whole area all sticky, too.

Should you ever come to the island, please do make sure to try the oatmeal.

The flavor was quite plain, however.

Our island was also abundant with fruit.

Imitation grapes made of modified raspberries, mandarins that allowed tasting various citrus flavors (orange / grapefruit / mandarin / ponkan orange / lemon) in one fruit, chestnuts that fruited like the echinoderms living on the bottom of the lake, cucumbers with flavors near the kiwi '*kiwicumbers*', apple cherries that looked like tiny apples and had the same flavor, bananas that however once their skins were peeled were cut to mouthful sizes '*magic bananas*'. There was some measure of confusion between flavors and shapes, but once you got used to it, there were no more problems.

"Go! Go! Go!" "Desktop clear! Move up!" "Breakfast allowed!" "Target inside!" "Standby for airstrike!"

Now then, time for the hot dishes.

Six waiter fairies shouldered a big plate like a portable shrine.

Toast / fried egg / beans / sausage / baked tomatoes / mushrooms. All of them cooked, all of them piping hot.

...well, I shall regretfully omit explanations about every single food.

They only had the same name, they were completely different foods, that was not mistaken.

To say it strictly, the tomatoes and the mushrooms were comparatively normal (growth speed aside), however the rest were just same-flavored, different things. The sausage was the stalk of sage (the perennial plant), a really silly story.

After breakfast was done, the first thing were royal audiences.

The inhabitants of the island crowded me by making a line with any sort of reason, so we drew lots and I only saw five of them.

"Your majesty, have a very happy day! I have finished something new. Please look."

The majority of audiences were like these, promotions of plants they had invented.

"Very well, do show us."

"Is this good?"

The fairy pushed forwards a potted plant. It was a plant with odd petals that reminded me of a sea anemone.

"Name's Special Motion."

The fairy approached his head to the tip of the fuzzy part. It looked like something sticky was seeping from there, as the fairy, after giving it a lick, came to promptly have a face like he was

dreaming and soiled himself.



"Hey boy."

"Whoh hoh hah huh fuh fuh," he appeared weird.

"In short, what sort of effect does it have?"

"This here, it makes you feel goood!"

"So it makes you drunk, then, in the end."

The minister, full of opinions, resolutely came forwards.

"It's drugs?"

"What! Arrest him."

The fairy was dragged away.

"From here onwards, the Special Motion is banned under the Narcotics Act."

"Yes ma'am," went the minister.

The population of the island was at that point close to eight thousand fairies, rules were necessary.

"Next item!"

I motioned the guard fairy with one hand. I stood from my throne (the chair for breakfast. It had been upgraded in comparison with the previous one).

"I am suspending the audiences. Today I shall be inspecting the country."

"Yes ma'm." "Cool." "What else from your majesty!" "I am so in love."

I left the house feeling the full confidence of my subordinates.

Previously, the island was filled with wild growing trees, but there were already no more traces of that era. Progress had carried on, and it was now wholly covered by the wave of wooden modernization.

The island was packed tight with facilities.

First I showed up at the pasture farm. There were a number of shepherd fairies.

"How has your farm been, of late?"

"Perfect!" "So-so!" "Bad!" "Average!"

"That will do well enough."

Normally, one imagined a pasture farm as having a small hill and plain surrounded by a fence. However, on our island, farms were a little different. They were on the lake surface.

"Look, look!"

Encouraged by the shepherd fairy, I moved my eyes to the water surface.

"Baah." "Baah." "Baaaah." "Bah." "...baaah."

White fluffy cotton furs were floating lightly on the lake surface in good number, peacefully baahing.

Sheep grass—

They could be harvested for waterproof cotton wool. Spider silk was a high class product and thus exclusively used for the queen, so the island relied on this grass wool for yarn spinning / textile production.

"All the grasses have a good fur, that is exceedingly good."

"The royal gratitude is happiness!"

"How is the fish tree growing?"

"This way?"

I was led to one tree standing at the shore.

It was a young tree of five meters of height, but it had no flat leaves.

Instead, it had a countless number of things dangling that reminded of peaches, which were working like fishing lines below the water surface. All the dangles were stirring about in the lake water.

"The population seems to be increasing well."

I tried carefully pulling one of the dangles sunk into the water. When I did, suddenly there was a vigorous pulling strength from the water. The motion was like struggling.

"E'yah!"

I tried pulling with full force, and on the dangles' end I found a silver fruit with an aerodynamic shape struggling vigorously.

"This fruit... looks like it would be delicious in a teriyaki."

"A shioyaki could also work!" "No, no, this is for a sashimi!" "Even a fresh sashimi, it would be good!" "My Very Best, a foil-yaki!"

"Once in a while, good old fish and chips would do fine..."

I dropped the aerodynamic silver 'fruit' into the lake. I had more to look forwards to in the future.

Right, right, if you ever came to our island, there is an attraction you must absolutely see.

That was the harvest of fava beans.

"Please show me the bean harvesting."

"Please come this way!"

We moved to a somewhat tall hill, the fava beans that had just matured were fidgeting in the air like, *br-br-br-br-br*.

The fava beans' shells had wings like insects and were flapping them, flying in the sky.

Did I mention fava beans are called 'sky beans' in Japanese?

Being plants that could absorb water and sunlight on their own, they normally flew at a height of about five meters, however as the seeds grew larger their flight capabilities reduced and they descended close to the ground.

That said they were more than nimble enough, to the point they were not quite catchable with bare hands, and so there they used one more type of plant.

The aforementioned plant grew thickly on the hill... it was called bean-catching grass. It resembled a mimosa, but it was in actuality quite the ferocious plant.

An ingredient that the fava beans liked was secreted from the compound leaf like a bivalve set vertically, and once lured in closer, it caught the bean and digested it. That said, since the bean-catching grass could only digest the shell, the seed remained as it was, preserved for a long period.

And so when the bean-catching grass was all closed, the leaves stuck together in triplet



lumps, and the beans could be harvested just as if they were normal beans.

Even if they looked the same, the fruit had this much drama behind it.

"This is going to be of very much help during breakfast."

"Eat them!" "Eat more of them!" "We work like beans, have them!"

It seemed bamboo grew by as much as several meters in one night, but the fairy plants all matured in a single night with nearly no exception.

That was why, ever day, we could gain abundant food, and life was also one of abundance.

Noon—

I had eaten my fill in the morning, so I made it simple with tea and bread (this was baked normally). Next, the queen's official duty awaited... making sweets.

"What?" "What are you making?" "Do you have lots?" "Is it candy?" "Is it chocolate?" "What about cake?"

The skilled population of our island was bad only at making sweets.

I stood in the kitchen and rolled up my sleeves.

"So, where are the walnuts?"

"Here, your majesty!"

There were lots of walnuts set ready.

They were one of the modified plants, the Tree Walnuts.

There was a line running in just one place of its tough shell, and once found and pulled it was simple to split and take out the fruit (the kernel).

I bit one,

"Flavor is also good. So, how about we bake some walnut biscuits with these today?"

"Awesome!" "There it is, the best one!" "I'm so glad I was born on Earth!" "I gotta inform everybody!" "Should we prepare a festival?" "Festival!" "Wait! First, shouldn't we help?"

"Madam queen!" "Your orders!" "Your orders!"

"Go play outside."

"UnMderstood!" "We go!" "Do we rest?"

They took off the chamberlain and guard attires and rushed outside.

"I propose we play ball!" "An offer has come!" "Isn't that too boring?" "But that is still fine!"

"Where's the ball?" "We gotta make it!"

Somebody took out a balsam firecracker and tossed it to the group of fairies who were unloading foodstuff from a freight car.

The balsam fruit exploded and the fairies were startled, so they rounded up into balls and fainted. They gathered those balls and sent them into arches,

"Let's pinball!" "Let's!" "Shall we!"

And so they went.

Awww, always in the way of people's work...

But there were an endless supply of fairies who had tired of work, so the staff will be quickly supplemented, it was all fine.

"Freight car, right?" "That was nasty!" "I wanna work!" "Found a uniform!" "I'm there!" "So pretty!" "Do we work?" "We work!" "We gotta work and earn our pensions!"

And that was how it went.

Similarly to the now-vanished chamberlain and guards, they all forgot what they were doing while they played, but somebody inevitably came back and filled those roles.

Was it not inconvenient to lack assistance?

Not at all, baking biscuits for eight thousand fairies was big work, so being alone was instead better.

I promptly began preliminary preparations for making the biscuits.

When I finished baking I took a breather, and looking at the passion flower modified into a wrist-watch flower wound at my wrist, I saw the hands were about to point at four PM.

Three to four PM were tea time.

The populace, when this time came, surrounded the palace like starved zombies.

They were not exactly screaming out for me to give it to them, but they were on standby with plenty of expectation, and if I had not been ready it was assured that it would end in ways that would invite terrifying regrets.

"Come, have your fill!"

Biscuits that would fill the bellies of eight thousand were the sizes of ones that would fill the stomachs of dozens of humans.

The massive biscuits had broken-up shapes, but without caring for that I served them on giant plates and pushed one towards the fairies surrounding the palace. The whole square was promptly dominated by chaos.

"Bwah!" "It's here!" "A biscuit with walnuts in it!" "It's so like a dream..." "There's so much of it!"

"Can we eat it?" "It's fine even if she gets angry, we should eat it en masse!"

I pushed a biscuit plate towards a different group, too.

"Bwyh!" "It looks just baked!" "Is it real?" "Today's biscuit has raised borders!" "Look at it!" "I'm so happy, it's sparkling!"

I slid a plate towards yet another group.

I used too much force, and the plate got stuck in the pub in front of the train station.

"Ah, sorry..."

The wall collapsed, and the plate stopped right before hitting a bunch of wild-looking fairies enjoying alcoholics at the counter.

"...what's this?"

The bartender fairy said that coolly.

"It came from that human over there."

The wild-looking fairy gave me a sidelong glance.

"First time I was blessed by the goddess... piiii!"

Right in the middle of his line the fairy attacked and pushed away the wild-looking fairy.

"But I'm just a little wolf!" "Instincts time!" "Biscuit, biscuit!" "Let's distribute it, bucket relay style!" "Whoopsie! Whoopsie!" "Daisy! Daisy!"

Finishing up was annoying, so I resorted to the drastic move of talon-gripping biscuits and tossing them to the crowd.

"Eat up!"

The frenzy in the square kept overheating more and more, a mess that at this point could be named a riot with no objections, but it was an usual event.

"...and now that I have done that... will they hand some to everyone, I wonder..."

If I did not look carefully, there are occasionally still ones without meals, which required attention.

I also piled all the wrapped biscuits I could pile on the freight car.

"Farm-fresh products, go!"

This ought deliver them to the fairies who lived far away.

"Is there anyone who has not had to eat? There are none, right?"

"For her majesty the queen, banzaaaai!" "Banzaaaai!" "Banzaaaai!"

The voices of joy I received from the populace did not feel bad at all.

"People of the country, that was a most acceptable meal!"

My control over this country was one hundred percent. Hoh hoh hoh.

"Madam queen! The cocoa bean cultivation... there's a big problem!"

"What happened?"

"We made a mistake with the cocoa... they became okaka beans!"

"Then the sweets tomorrow will be rice and miso soup!"

Rice + okaka (chopped katsuboshi) = rice and miso soup.

"Nooo!"

Incidentally, the fairies did not eat human food.

"Then hurry up and develop cocoa! Without it, no matter how long you wait, chocolate will remain unfeasible!"

"We might have a teensy lack of effort! It might be impossible!"

Awww, the Gloom Clouds were still there!

"Do your best! Don't lose!"

And so it was that another busy day of the queen passed by.

Having entered their Fever Period, the fairies skyrocketed in a number of meanings.

Even the oak at the center of the island had been fallen, and right now in the same place there towered a magnificent wooden palace in the baroque style.

It was a grandiose building modeled after the Saint Peter's Cathedral. To specify, what could be said to be the particular characteristics of this palace were the intricately detailed dome and the eight Corinthian style wooden pillars supporting it.

The pompous / magnificent / lavish palace was also impressive in its interior.

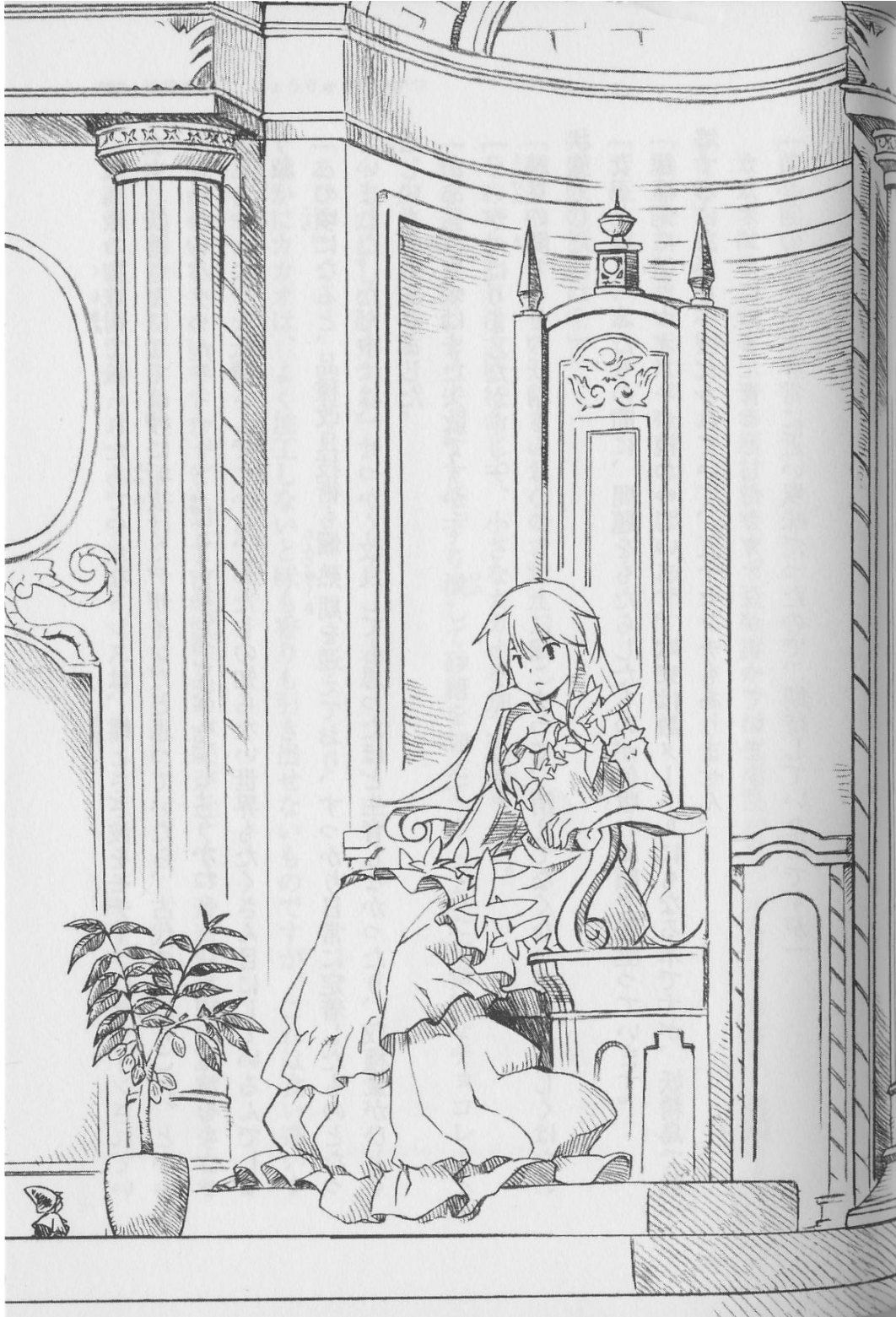
It did not have religious paintings, however it did have a slight variant of that same Catholic showiness. The pillars and the arches each were artistic products made of a single piece, and the nave that went through the palace, coupled with the coloring, the make, and the effusion of light, was marvelously attired with what seemed to be a slice of the heavenly world.

Passing through the corridor, we enter in the area for audiences, cooking, and eating for the queen, which was right below the dome. How the colored light poured down from the skylight made of stained glass (which could be made by secretions of transparent film) felt truly like an illusion.

...on that stained glass there was an image of me made more beautiful, so it felt just a little bit awkward which, if I had to say it, was a minus point.

I was now living in this wonderful palace (1LDK).

Confined and splendid mostly suited me, I felt.



The charming dress weaved from the best spider silk was designed with a motif of butterflies and waves. If you think it an oddly sophisticated design for the fairies, it was seemingly ripped off from a Paris fashion show of the ancient times. Now what were fashion shows, I wondered? It came from the fairies, who could catch reception waves from the air, so they had to have seen many worlds that I never had.

In the era we had reached, item modification technologies had come to full maturity, and had wholly taken hold of daily life. However, among them there were some that did not grow as thought, and some that had a terribly scarce harvest.

"Awww, another failure with cocoa, then."

"...we did our best, but..."

In that audience room, the fairy had shrunk more than normal, to the point where it would not be odd if he had vanished entirely.

In the space between queen and vassal there stood with nonchalance what carried the issue. In the pot there was a cocoa tree planted. It normally was a tree that grew several meters, but to cultivate on the Fairy Island it had been miniaturized, it was not even fifteen centimeters in size.

The cocoa tree still had fresh cocoa bean fruits.

"The trial product of two times ago was exceedingly close in flavor, so I did have expectations."

"Sorries..."

Cocoa was the main ingredient for chocolate. Just this one thing we had no substitute for, and we had no success in replicating it, either.

"As far as looks go, however, it does look like cocoa."

"And more sorries..."

"What was the cause of the failure?"

"The tuning of the taste is inadequate."

And there I ordered my minister and made them work the tiny cocoa.

He picked the seed, split them, roasted them, squashed them, added sugar... and I tried to give a lick to the rudimentarily done chocolate.

"...it tastes like snail."

"AyEh."

Of course, without working it over, it was difficult to have flavor and scent from cocoa, but this was too different a taste.

"But is that not odd. How come the older test product had a close flavor, but the newest version has suddenly become a snail?"

"Very very sorries..."

"So it is as I thought, chocolate will be impossible to obtain."

I came to feel that contacting the caravan and arranging for it would be far faster.

However, this body that had gotten used to a life of ease was slow to start that kind of work.

"Excuse me, I have a proposal," said the fairy fearfully. "You could help us, madam queen!"

"What, me? What could I possibly be able to do?"

"There are, there are, there are lots of things!"

And then, and then—

"Cocoa hell!"

"...that is one large volume, indeed."

A large volume of cocoa in the process of being modified was carried to the palace. The first job seemed to be to process it and compare the flavor.

"Try try each flavor, queen!"

"Sure..."

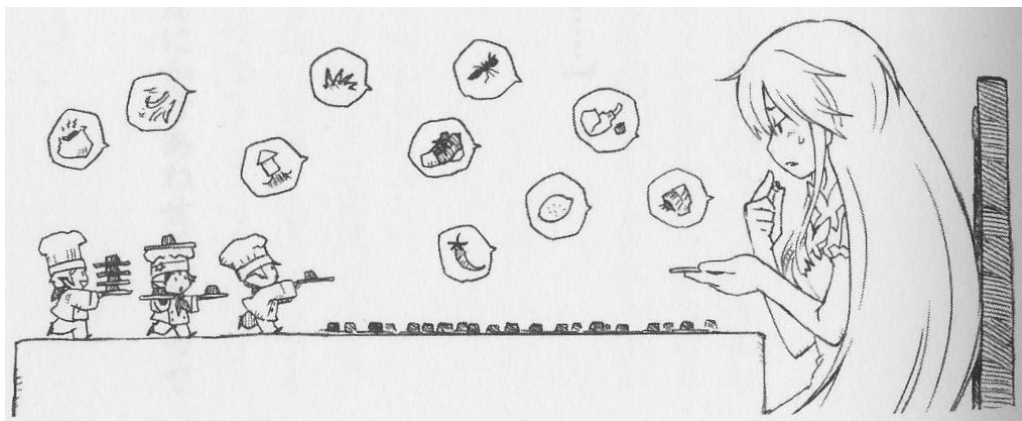
There were about one hundred varieties of cocoa paste samples.

The initial first plate tasted like mustard, it was unbearable.

"Yuck!"

"That's the way everything goes?"

I drank water to reset my taste buds, then tried sampling the next plate.



"Salty..."

"Sour..."

I tasted the flavors from one end to another.

"Insect flavor."

"Weed flavor."

"Leather boots flavor."

Be it this, be it that, they all tasted bad.

Every once in a while there was a flavor that made me think it was maybe a little better.

"This is sort of chocolate-ish."

"Then we will set it aside!"

But the tasting was still allowed to continue.

"Why?"

"We got lots of samples!"

Another three hundred plates were added on the table.

"....."

Great Flavor Fair In Da Mouth.

It proceeded for about fifty dishes, then,

"This... is chocolate-ish? I cannot quite tell..."

"If it's even a little more sha-KIN!, then we will set it aside!"

The one hundredth forty seventh plate.

"It does not taste like chocolate, but it is not like it lacks character..."

"We're setting it aside!"

The two hundredth nineteenth plate.

"Uhhmm... it sort of did not taste like squid or sawdust, so..."

"Set aside!"

The two hundredth seventy eighth plate.

"....."

"Set a-a-aside!"

At long last I had finished tasting all the plates.

"...I have heartburn."

"Thanksy for the hard work!"

"So, what are you going to do?"

"We're going to combine the chocolate-ish ones."

We had singled out the cocoa with more chocolate-ish flavor from among many samples.

If they combined that, the chocolate-ish flavor should be denser—

"Will it, now~?"

"We'll see you again tomorrow!"

That day I could not manage to have dinner.

And the next day it was cocoa tasting again!

"This." "Set aside!"

"This, I believe." "Aside♪!"

"This might be nice." "Aside aside♪!"

This had to be a boring job for the fairy as well, as he danced at the end.

"Raw garbage flavor! Please erase these genes from this world."

"We got our first rejection!"

I picked a number of chocolate-ish cocoa and again had the fairies combine them and cultivate them at high speed. And the next day, again with tasting—

"I feel like I am going to die."

"This work gotta be carried out by a human..."

"Excuse me, what did you do about the other food plants?"

"We went at random and they came out tasty."

What I suddenly thought was that the chocolate's bizarre badness had a set up of a single instant, had it not. Were this wheat, there was a breadth of flavors that could be considered tasty, even those a little off were edible... something like that.

"It appears the flavoring of sweets is at the basis of all this..."

"Today we got four hundred dishes!"

The desk was quickly flooded with tiny plates.

"Eeeek!"

Surmounting those days of distress (and also completely forgetting our original objective) we at long last came to have something that tasted of chocolate.

"My, this feels like chocolate, more or less. It does not taste like *those* things, perhaps. But, well, it sort of tastes like chocolate."

"Is it weird?"

"It is not especially tasty, but, well, it can be ranked as chocolate, maybe."

"...we're not gonna ask for too much! We follow you, madam queen!"

"Good boy!"

I squeezed him.

"Still, this strawberry flavored chocolate is quite like strawberry flavored chocolate indeed."

"The lucky break one?"

"And so I was wondering, if you removed the strawberry elements, it would have a normal flavor, would it not."

"Then!" he said that like it was obvious. "We'll prepare lots, and you can choose the one with

the least strawberry flavor!"

"Impossible, impossible! You are misunderstanding me!"

If they did that I would die of heartburn.

"...I thought you could manipulate the genes or remove them automatically."

"The genes that give it strawberry flavor are combined, it's really hard to search for them. We don't get how!"

"Then let us do like this," since I did not want normal chocolate anymore. "We will have cocoa that yields exclusively strawberry flavor chocolate, and that is where we leave its development as."

"That so..."

"What is it? Dissatisfied?"

"Who knows!"

"This tastes good even unmixed, I believe it a good thing."

"Then we cross the lines. We leave the flavoring to you!"

And so it was that strawberry chocolate cocoa came to be cultivated.

Working over the harvested cocoa beans, I distributed the very first tablet of chocostrawberry to the whole of the island's population.

And how was it received in the end?

They took off the wrapping paper, they took off the tinfoil, and had their first bite.

"...huh?"

As the producer, I myself was the first one surprised.

Was this the flavor it had?

The reaction of the crowd gathered in the square was—

"..." "...how is it?" "...what?" "...well." "...something." "...mh." "...bof." "...right." "...sorta." "...if I gotta say it, it's novel?" "...yeeeeah."

Total national population state of weirdness.

"Cocoa minister, attend."

"Present!"

The fairy in charge of cocoa appeared from nowhere.

"The flavor is different from when I tasted it, how come?"

"...that question is super hard."

"If you do not understand why, then no one understands."

"Wonder why!"

It appeared that he seriously did not understand the reason, remaining as he did with his head tilted.

Even after the pains of sorting through the taste, the process did not go as planned, a difficulty that made me throw my hands up in the air. I was reluctant to say goodbye to chocolate, but it was certainly something that was not impossible to get one's hands on, so we shall suspend research regarding cocoa for the time being, or so I decided in my heart.

At the moment, I had to make my thoughts consider the reason why just a little bit more. That said, even supposing I managed to carefully consider this, I was not quite good at any of these things, so I did not pay any attention to points such as where the cocoa was growing on the island or the quality of the lake water around it.

The fairies were remarkably lacking in taste in making sweets.

They should just be making them as the recipes say, but they did not.

Like there was some missing piece that required human hands, they stubbornly refused to



make them for themselves.

They could prepare the ingredients. They could also prepare the environment. They could get whatever tool together. But they could not make sweets. In the end, that became a human's job.

But satisfying eight thousand fairies every day was a serious problem.

I could bear the daily heavy labor only by thinking it as the revered duty of a queen.

And then, one day, when I was in my bedroom enjoying some unwinding, a fairy rushed in in great panic.

"This is really big!"

It was the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the one who managed the various modifications of food-related plants.

"If this is an audience then you have to respect the official hours, do you not."

I paused my hands as I was writing a record and pinched the fairy up onto the writing table.

"It's that, you know, we drew lots, and I lost lots."

"That is because consultations on the completely irrelevant have increased of late."

There were even some that simply wanted to experience an audience.

"It has to be an extremely important invention, correct?"

"...maybe."

"Maybe I will just toss you outside~."

"Look! First of all look!"

The potted plant he was holding there was something I had never seen, which resembled a valley lily.



It had bell-like fruits, half-transparent like they were frozen water drops, and they were leaning down as if bowing to their weight.

"I have heard that valley lilies are poisonous."

I was about to open the window and toss out the fairy along with the pot when,

"Ain't valley lilies! Believe me!"

He was sort of desperate, huh.

"How amazing is this fruit? It is quite pretty, still."

"Try eating it, you will see!"

"...I do not actually think they are poisoned, do understand."

Half-transparent fruits were fruits that sort of drew interest.

I pinched one with my fingertips, and the fruit immediately came off the branch. I thought they would be soft, but these fruits were abnormally hard. These were just like...

I put it on my tongue to try the taste, and promptly a nostalgic flavor spread within my mouth.

"This is startling. This is a candy, is it not?"

"It sort of came through by some lucky coincidence!"

"...I see. What you fairies cannot make, the plants you fairies make can, then."

"What do we do?"

As the queen, there was only one thing I could order.

"Full power."

"Huwah?"

"Cultivate them with full power. Keep on testing any change that happens suddenly. Keep on combining them, extending to all sorts of possibilities. Whatever happens, keep the subspecies increasing. Make it so you have candies of every flavor. On a national scale."

"National scale, huh!"

"Here, the decree."

I wrote only "do it" on the memo grass (white leaves that were easily dyed), signed it, then handed it to the fairy.

"Waaah, we'll do it!"

The fairy had the decree and the plant in hand as he vanished outside the window.

The term *angiosperms* indicated plants that bloomed flowers, ovules surrounded by ovaries were their special characteristic, and are said to be the most advanced among plants, you see. Over two hundred and fifty thousand varieties existed at present, making them real winners.

Also, there were many equipped with a system of pollination that employed insects and animals, and flowers and nectar were steps taken for those purposes.

In other words, if we assume that they have flowers and nectar for the purpose of attracting insects, then plants that employed fairy and human tea breaks... they too might perhaps appear in experimental areas where variety was preserved to impressive extents.

And those plants ought not be called *angiosperms*, but *sweetsperms*, indeed.

Outbursts were the fairies' way when a direction was established.

Sweets plants increased in number in the blink of an eye and conquered the island.

The reworking of breeds continued, the varieties of flavors increased dramatically.

Suddenly a change was spotted, the omen of change expanded, and crossing was attempted with a variety of seeds. In the beginning it was a spherical candy about the size of solidified nectar, but eventually things of solidified pollen that tasted like baked candies appeared, things with a taste resembling pie were born, things strikingly close to plum pudding were developed, and eventually they came to cultivate mushrooms that felt like they were made of chocolate and biscuit.

What we lacked was no longer so.

We came to see the perfectionment of our island.

It was a dream Eden. An island of plenty where everybody could live by merely playing.

My making sweets went back from duty to hobby, and the flow of time also changed to be much more leisurely.

At this point, there was nearly no one who was working on the island. Work itself had

disappeared.

We lived in convenience by eating, having fun, and playing.

Living in a closed environment, surrounded by things that fulfilled us, made life terrifyingly monotonous.

We spent that time that we had far too much of in festival-like merriment. We used whatever excuse to carry out parades and engage in carnivals. Rituals of the world of reality... in other words, it became the cause of the development of religion, you see.

One day, a fairy said this.

"I kinda want a monument."

The pyramids, the Great Wall of China, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Arch of Triumph, the Statue of Liberty. The majority of countries that left their names in history had monuments.

"I so want it!" "And we got nothing to do!" "I want it too much!" "The passion we had forgotten is revived!" "Let's do it!" "Let's do it, let's do it!" "We are begging for it!"

The population came to inquire of me, their queen.

"Go on ahead."

I gladly gave them permission. I was also bored beyond help.

I wish we could have ended things there, however. But humans were beings that did not quite work right.

The first monument was a totem pole of a height of around five meters.

It was a simple thing of cut and planed tree trunk, and the scale felt restrained for something that had been made by fairies. The unveiling was also unsatisfactory, the festival lacked in revelry, and the citizens criticized it.

"Ain't showy enough!" "Make it more dynamic!" "Whatever else, all else aside, you gotta make it big!" "It's all kinda improvised!" "It's important for it to be easy to understand!" "More of that alluring character!" "I want more passion to it!" "Isn't it too niche?" "You gotta catch the right layers!"

There were some bizarre expectations mixed in there, but that was how it went.

The developers of the first monument all as one clad in Gloom Cloud. However, the construction of a second monument was quickly planned.

They began making a wooden pyramid ten meters high.

It was to be the largest constructed building on the island, the one which stood out more than any. However, although a large enterprise, it did not involve all eight thousand inhabitants of the islands. It was a situation where the early bird caught the worm, where only the ones who moved won, and so there came to be a crowd of fairies that could do nothing but twiddle their thumbs and have all the excitement by gazing on.

The one who were making it were fine, but those who were just looking were bored!

That frustration accumulated, and then... it exploded.

The next morning, a Colosseum (the roman circular fighting arena) had been built next to the pyramid.

It had been made overnight by a group of fairies that could no longer be patient.

The pyramid team was the most surprised.

This magnificent Colosseum had appeared seemingly out of spite, however in their mental constitution there existed no aggressive emotions such as antagonism or jealousy.

And so... they became depressed.

"Dooown..."

They were finally able to live cheerful and satisfying days, but they went back to negative again.

However, the passion for the monument had not died out, the next day there was a Stonehenge, the day after that a Taj Mahal, the day after that too there were the hanging gardens of Babylon, and then more, one after another, built up without order.

The area around the palace had now lost all coherence.

Historical buildings were replicated miniature-sized without the tiniest of differences, standing side by side like some exhibition, a scene like in a comedy.

The Miniature Boom still continued, as there was a Great Wall of China on the shore, on the prow promontory there was the lighthouse of Alexandria, and, using the pyramid abandoned partway through construction as pedestal, even the leaning tower of Pisa could be witnessed. The mingling of history had here its extreme.

The bustle of the festival on this tiny island was going to continue endlessly, I thought.

On that day, I had gone out for a walk. I thought I had to exercise every once in a while.

By the time I headed for the area beyond the monuments lining my surroundings, I witnessed a terrifying truth. The trees that grew naturally so abundantly on the island were nearly all gone.

In addition to the scarcity of that lumber that supported every sort of plant-oriented civilization, the rampant and unruly Monument Fever further exacerbated things and accelerated the lumbering.

The forestry resources of the island had been completely destroyed.

"Well, still, they will grow back right away, will they not."

Taking no heed of the shudder that ran through my body, I adopted an optimistic stance.

But as it happened—

"They are not growing?"

The group of fairies working as Ministers of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries came to visit the palace at the end of their wits.

"For some reason." "They won't." "At all." "In the slightest."

Summarizing what they discussed, seeds that grew poorly had suddenly begun coming to the forefront of late, the speed of growth was decreasing on a daily basis, and in these few days the vast majority of the plants had returned to normal growth speeds.

"Is that not a bad thing?"

"It's super bad!" "Super bad!" "I'm resolved to super punishment and dismissal!" "This might super offset things!" "I want to do something about it using superstring theory!" "Isn't this taking things to super extremes?" "This is getting super rampant!" "Super doesn't balance the sheets!" "That was the result of a super investigation!"

"T-, the result of an investigation? What was it?"

Although I was about to ignore even that, I bit in a fluster on just the last statement.

"The soil is in ruins."

"Ahhh... that was a possibility we had to think about. Concretely speaking?"

The fairies grabbed their heads.

"Concretely speaking, we dunno what to do!"

"The soil has been overabused, this I understand. What is the cause?"

"We got no fertilizer, so the fields got all bad."

"Fertilizer cannot be had without livestock."

"The livestock were plants?"

Without manure the land will do nothing but become more barren, this was certainly logical.

"The woods are all gone."

The island's ecosystem had been actually sort of destroyed in an instant, I came to think. A disturbance in the ecosystem, the stripping of vegetation, the destruction of the soil. How much burden was put on the ground by the growth of fairy plants, so far removed from the norm?

Right, probably a hundred times the damage as normal—

"We measured the level of nutritional salts in the soil."

"How was it?"

"Dehydration seems to be kind of advancing."

No matter the epoch, without nutrition to suck up there was no helping the plants, indeed.

"This is troubling... now that you mention it, the soil's capacity to retain water had been protected by the woods, and the land that had become bare due to environmental destruction is soil quick to runoff, it is said."

"For now, it looks like rain won't be falling!" "That's nice!" "Silver lining in the dark cloud, so to say!" "No big thing!" "We are unconcerned!" "The water purification plant broke, though."

"REPEAT!"

Sixteen shots per second on the head of the one who spoke last.

"The water purification plant has broken."

"When!"

"Earlier. We got not trees, so it looks like we can't fix it?"

My mood was like, Jesus.

"...please disassemble some of the monuments and use them to fix it."

"What?" "Dis... assemble?" "Break our symbols? Break them?"

"Water is the source of life, so I request that you prioritize it. Sorry."

"Then... we'll do that." One of them left to make contact.

"If rain falls then you might just have to set out plenty of pails and gather water."

This situation was like one in a cartoon.

"The right time might have come, you see."

"The right time to time it right?"

He tilted his head as if he had requested confirmation, so I wordlessly poked his forehead.

A dramatic change came in our daily life.

The land became unable to sustain the expenses we had so far, and the food situation worsened all at once.

Although we managed to preserve water treatment, production of electricity came to an end.

The power production of the pineapples lowered, and they no longer produced electricity beyond what could make one's tongue tingle.

We scratched it together somehow and made lighting usable, but the water heater became just up and useless. Whatever else, the energy used for it was the nourishment of the soil. If used it would disappear, that was obvious. The fact was once again confirmed, though belatedly.

But even at a time like this there were crowds of fairies making new plants.

As good as their work was this was, just at the present, a minus.

I forbade all kinds of modifications of produced seeds as well as genetic manipulation.

Also, as the teacakes could no longer be produced like before, the population of the island simultaneously ended up losing both work and pleasure.

It felt like the shine was vanishing from the faces of the fairies as each second passed.

Eight thousand, or rather a larger number of fairies than that with nothing they could do.

Having lost the goal of their lives, they came to line the shore from morning to evening, sitting cross-legged.

"Happiness, what is that?" "Who knows." "It got no shape, I really don't know." "What if it's fun tomorrow?" "I want to burst with excitement." "I'll wait here for a fun tomorrow."

A scene that stabbed a bunch of invisible blades into my heart.

On top of no longer being able to make sweets, as per before, we had that problem... a serious lack of foodstuff. With the size of the island, normal growth speed could not provide enough foodstuff for myself alone. The food that more or less remained in the palace would not keep for more than a few days.

The time for a decision had come.

"...we run away."

I gathered a few fairies and gave them my queenly decision.

"Where are you going?"

"Somewhere else... that island over there would be fine... no, I would rather go to land, of course. Also, I will not be involved your next civilization, so if I may request, you should make it one of extreme energy conservation."

"Madam queen, are you going away?"

"Until you are used to the land, I must act the ambassador. That is why I will still watch over you."

"By swimming with everybody?"

"Please disassemble a monument and build a boat. It is right over there, so it should be easy to cross over."

"Is it over already?"

"Yes."

The fairies began being dazed like their souls had been picked out.

"What is it?"

"...who knows." "...my strength, it's all gone." "...so it's over." "...but it was so much fun." "...it's like a hole has opened in my heart."

Awww, they were mentally collapsing.

"But, you see, with things like this even if I stayed on the island there will be little hope of recovery, even if I stayed with you there does not look like there would be anything fun, so I believe that it would be much better to cut things off at this point and go bye bye, see?"

"...if your family had an incurable disease, would you say the same?"

"That is too serious, much too serious! I cannot answer!"

That comeback was preposterous.

"Let us find a new joy in a new land! OK?"

Wah! Wah! Wah!

Dah! Dah! Dah!

T'bohBohBohBohBoh!

I thought I was being enveloped by a crowd of cheers, but it was actually the sound of rain hitting the roof.

It was super loud.

"...unbelievable that rain would make a sound this roaring without soundproofing... awww, my ears hurt..."

"Looks like heavy rain!"

One of them said that while dangling at the window and gazing outside.

"The economic climate looks bad..."

Though it was the middle of the day, outside it was as dark as night.

As if to seal away our emotions, the rain kept endlessly, endlessly, endlessly, endlessly pouring down.

"It is raining far too much!"

It just kept pouring down endlessly.

Five days had passed since then.

With foodstuff curtailed, those lunches from before had gone away.

"Just whyyy will it not end!"

"It's only raining on this island."

"What? It is?"

The mist from the rain was tremendous and I could not see anything, so I was unable to confirm the fairy's words.

"The raincloud got around the same size as the lake."

"If we assume that is true, then that is much too unnatural, I say."

"Too much so!" "Don't really like them occult stuff!" "It's unscientific!"

That ranked among the top ten sentences a fairy ought never say.

"With so much rain falling, I am worried about the other fairies."

"We're fine even wet, you know?"

"Wish we had at least made them an improvised rain shelter, however. Well, there are dedicated fairy doors, so I suppose if they have trouble they can just come in."

And just as I was speaking of that, a single soaking wet fairy opened the tiny dedicated door next to the entrance and came in.

He then wrung his overcoat and introduced himself like this.

"I'm a traveler."

"I see."

"Isn't the rain terrible?" "Where did you come from?" "From the village over there?" "That is, sure, that is a reeeally far away place." "Are you a wanderer?" "That's no good!"

Ignoring the farcical conversation of the fairies, I looked at the unclearing sky with its unceasing rain and exhaled a long sigh.

It clouded the window just a little, breaking my sight with white.

"Madam queen, I have a question!"

"Eh?"

The self-addressed traveler fairy clambered up to the windowsill.

"I heard a rumor in town that you are leaving the island."

"I did say that. Once the rain ends, we will brutally smash down the monuments that you all came together to build a boat in their place that has not a single shred of creativity and is pure undiluted functionality so that I can throw away all the fun days and all the nostalgic memories and cross over to the opposite shore to once again feel pain and suffering and thus begin a new life."

Having heard my sarcasm, the traveler was promptly clad in a Gloom Cloud.

"Dooown... dooown..."

Through that prank, I came to witness a bizarre phenomenon.

"Mh? Why you... that cloud...?"

The large Gloom Cloud that followed the traveler around leaked outside from the gaps in the

window, smoothly floated up and headed for the sky—

"Those rainclouds, it cannot be..."

All of them... all of them, all of them, were Gloom Clouds?

"WHAAAAAAT?!"

They would never stop!

As long as the fairies' mood did not improve, the clouds will never scatter and the rain will never stop!

"This is far too ridiculous... eh? Which means what? That this is not the time to calmly wait for fair weather...?"

What went back and forth through my breast was a far too belated presentment.

It was because, right then, I was hearing the merciless sound of battering water thundering about the island.

Five days of pouring rain was more than enough to raise the water level and cause a storm on the surface of the lake.

"The ground seems to have been shaking for the last while...?"

"The ground is all rattle-rattling?"

The ground had been depleted at several hundred times the average speed and did not have the support of the roots of the trees. Even if just swept by a passing rain, it was no mystery whatsoever that it would turn into brittle and crumbly earth.

"In other words..."

An event that was pure reality was about to happen.

The palace shook as if punched by a giant and tilted to the side. The fairies rounded up and tumbled down towards the wall, and I as well was being tossed around while still hanging on to the curtains.

"We are being swept away!"

I opened the window and saw that the ground of the island was nearly entirely hidden by water. The ground was swept away in an instant, and it even changed the landscape. I could not believe that what was striking my face like stones were raindrops.

I shouted as loud as I could towards the whole of the island.

"PEOPLEEE, COME INTO THE PALAAAAACE!"

The rest, at that point, could only be left to chance—

"Master human, master human!"

A tiny hand patting my cheek woke me up.

"Mh... what time is it?"

"Who knows!"

I slowly opened my eyes to find that the golden decorative curtain, knit with an arch of autumn colors and gradation of light, was vigorously flying towards my eyes.

"My, first time in a while we have had clear weather..."

It appeared I was laying on my back on the ground.

Was I sleeping? No, had I passed out, no mistake. So, why did I pass out?

Were I a naive girl, at this point I would be confused and be completely helpless, but happily I had survivor circuits cultivated by experience.

I recalled the situation in which I found myself part by part.

"...OK."

The events at the island. The destruction of a lifestyle. And then the flood.

As I could recall, I could also manage to accept.



"Fairies, roll call."

"Ma'am!"

I listened dazedly to the voices of the fairies that had gathered around me, taking count of countless groups, like some distant uproar.

Unlike the head, the body did not seem capable of seeing long-term, so I was still a little dazed.

I lifted up my upper body and looked around and found out that I was on the lake shore. It appeared we managed to use the palace as an ark and escape safely.

The ruins of the palace, split in two, were a little further away.

"Confirmed that nine hundred eighty seven have survived," announced a fairy.

"So nearly seven thousand have dispersed...?"

That was much too sad and perhaps hard to accept, I felt.

"They went somewhere."

"Really? They did not drown?"

"We don't drown."

Really now, but although I did not trust that, I also thought that fairies would not lie.

"...right, so they scattered."

If so, well, it was not a bad result, I thought.

The Gloom Clouds cleared up, and the lake's surface returned to a calmness that felt unreal.

I stood up and the fairies gathered at my feet.

"We wanna make a new country!" "We waited for it!" "Please!" "Guide us!" "Rule us us!" "We'll obey-bey!"

Seriously, the recent humanity learned no lessons, it worried me.

I bathed with a loud voice the fairies that had gathered with excited faces.

"DISPEEEEEEEEEERSE!"

"PIIIIIIIIIIIII?!"

Startled, they scattered pell-mell like baby spiders in every direction and vanished into the woods.

Not one remained.

"This is good. Evidence hiding: complete."

Next I only had to return to my temporary dwelling and live a life like nothing happened – if I submitted a calm report whenever I had time, then all would have been perfect.

"Much too perfect," I tightened my fists hard. "Flawless."

Even if one island on the lake were to completely and wholly disappear, that would not be a problem in the slightest. That was because, outside of the people of the land, no one would notice, you see.

"I see the island's gone."

"HYYYH?!"

Behind me stood Grandfather and Assistant-san, both dressed for travel.

"Eek!"

"What's with you? You have a face like you've seen a ghost."

"W-, why are you here?"

"We got contacted by the farmers who told us they didn't hear any news from you, so I thought I'd come have a look just in case. They did seem worried."

"....."

Assistant-san had a worried face. I wondered whether he had guessed that something might have happened to me relating to the fairies.

"I thought there was a nice island on that lake. I believed it had at the very least three endemic species, including really rare spiders."

"My, those spiders you say, huuuh, sooo that was how it was, I see... oh hoh hoh hoh!"

"You did something, right?"

"I did not, I just happened to come by and look around... maybe the fairies did something?" Grandfather came to glare at me. His eyes spoke as much as a mouth, and an experienced person could guess what a younger person was thinking as if reading a book. A real adult would, at least.

Still, at least this once I was also able to read the meaning of his gaze.

...he was super suspecting me.

"Why're you looking away?"

"...no other mean is available to me."

"What's that wreck? Kinda looks like a palace, though."

"Some wreckage from this area, I suppose."

"So we got new ruins too. If that's ruins from a country that's just fallen, well, I guess it makes sense."

I was being all too easily cornered, I was.

Although he did not allude to it, my clothes were also wet, and I was stained with mud all over. A condition that, whatever the thought, would be suspected live.

As I was shedding mountains of cold sweat I fumbled around for a good idea, but I could just not think of any.

By the time I eventually resolved to give up about this, Grandfather averted his face and said this with a soft tone.

"...so the cleanup didn't go well."

"What?"

Grandfather grinned.

"You inexperienced little thing."

Thump, and a fist lightly poked my head.

It was that nostalgic physical punishment of Grandfather's, which I had no longer received ever since my homecoming.

"This is a replica of a Corinthian marble pillar, huh. Seriously. You were really having fun on your own out there, looks like."

"Yes, well... it was the joy of living, how is it called..."

The Iron Fist Punishment, truly the first in several years, was to scold me for not being good at cleaning up after myself, unbelievable.

Assistant-san giggled.

And so it was that I returned from a temporary wandering to a daily life that had so many nostalgic things in it.

## Fairy Memo - Swarm-induced Stress

Even fairies, when their population increases to extremes, start obsessively thinking things such as, "I'm... just unwanted, right?" "I don't want to become an adult, not at all." "I don't wanna go to school" and others, losing their energy.

For times like these the fairies have the natural disposition of scattering as their population reaches the appropriate size, but when they have a reason that makes it hard for them to leave they can grin and bear it, so the stress accumulates.

We should all make sure to be careful when feeding the fairies.



## Periodic Report - July

### 1. First Half

With poor harvest and a lack of supplied materials as reasons, Kusunoki Village fell into a situation of food scarcity, however, as if in response to that, foodstuff and daily necessities came to circulate in large numbers through unknown means.

As an oddity, there were many voices that said that these items lined the shelves on their own, pointing out that these foods / necessities could probably be bequests of the fairies, and so an investigation was carried out.

At the point in time of the beginning of the investigation, part of the foodstuff was unavoidably consumed as emergency food, however voices were raised concerning their safety.

An inspection of Fairy Co., the indicated point of origin of those products, was carried out.

As a result, it became clear that the company was a business (to be specific, its remnants) formerly founded by human hands about two centuries ago, and at present expanded / managed by fairies with the goal of supporting humans.

As a variety of products was already being produced, the majority proved impossible to recover, however we have analyzed the foodstuff and confirmed their safety.

For the major products manufactured and their material composition, please consult the accompanying sheet.

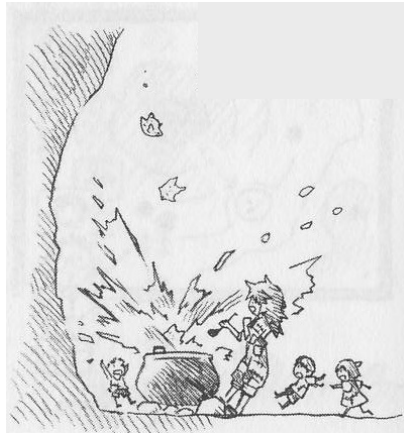
Also, as a secondary problem, the synthesized chicken meat that had been one of the factory's products had acquired sentience, and they had gone into a strike against the fairies, who managed the place. The event ended with a part of the elite sentient chicken meat stealing management privileges from the fairies and arbitrarily continuing to run the factory, but dissatisfied with the result of our investigation, they fled.

It is thought that the factory has come into operation comparatively recently, but there remained records stating that chicken meat was shipped in that initial period, though for a short time. Due to the strife, the majority of individuals that had fled the factory had been witnessed becoming feral, and part of the chicken meat had been witnessed walking about even in the village prior to the inspection. Whether this chicken meat still has the capacity of breeding is unclear.

It is known that tools made by fairy hands have occasionally shown bizarre signs of intelligence, and it is thought that is applicable to the current instance.

This is no more than speculation, but there is a possibility that the main cause why the products appear of their own would be that the products themselves move of their own power, automatically appearing on the shelves.

Due to the investigation that followed, the wild chicken meat committed group suicide off of a cliff, a shocking scene that has been recorded (reference image).



This is no fabrication but historical fact, but though it happened to be recorded, it can be concluded that the Mediators had nothing to do with it, that is a fact.

To speculate, there is a possibility that the chicken meat had been assembled with the nature of '*be eaten by humans*', and it is therefore possible that this nature has appeared in a bizarre form, which was this group suicide.

## 2. Second half

The present office received a report stating that the density of fairy population around Kusunoki Village had reached a level that could no longer be ignored, and promptly investigated ways to deal with that situation.

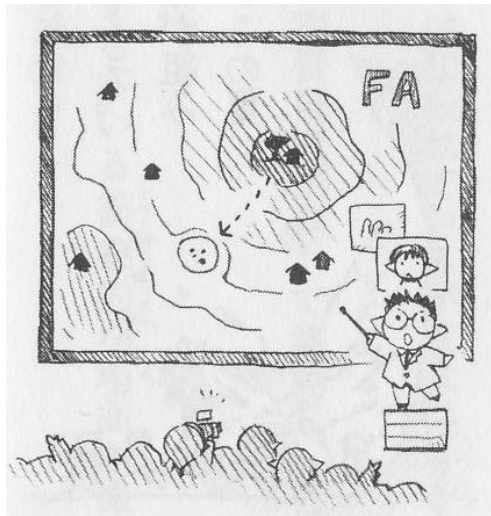
There were many fairies that complained of stress-caused sense of hollowness / eye strain / sensitivity to cold / neck stiffness / not wanting to go to school / insomnia / unease towards the future, and a plan to migrate accompanied by one employee was quickly established. Migration was successfully accomplished, and the fairies came to live around a lake with few humans around. The employee continued her observation on location for the following few days, confirming that the fairies were managing things in safety.

It appeared that human involvement was significant in causing the increase in their population, even the original few dozens who had left the overcrowded land in the present event increased to several thousand. This appears to be a temporary, initial period increase due to the presence of the accompanying employee as well as the sense of liberation, things stabilized after that.

Also, being that a Mediator with comparatively deep relationship with the fairies had transferred to a distant location, the activities of the fairies surrounding Kusunoki Village settled down. An efflux of population also occurred, and the instances of fairies witnessed in the area around the Village multiplied. The problem of overpopulation has been properly resolved.

It is just that we have received the following from the local fairies residing around Kusunoki Village,

"The ruins this time are disappointing!" "The explanation is insufficient?" "There's prejudice towards us!" "We need to make an effort and compromise!," and other harsh voices of criticism.



## Afterword

This is the author. I managed somehow.

This days I've been thinking about how to die.

Ah, no, it's not as you all imagine, it's nothing so mentally damaged. You know how it is, it's often been like that of late. A death note... not, an ending note. The thing where you summarize what to do and how to do it in case you die. Planning things like that.

The work of author is said to be fairly close to dying, so it's natural that I'd thoroughly think of that on a daily basis. Even for a god of death, when a writer has lost his ability to write it's time to hunt, it's the spirit of the season. Gotta be prepared!

I have decided my way of dying.

My plan is Freezing To Death, when I lose my ability to write I'll go to a park in Winter, sit on the swing, irresolutely reflect on my life like in a first-person novel and freeze to death, a poetic ending, but on thinking about it, that would be a problem for the management, and besides of late there's a trend of taking away playground equipment, you see. I will of course pass on freezing to death in situations like being entangled in a jungle gym, being half-buried in a sandbox, sitting on a see-saw with no one on the other side, or sitting cross-legged at the top of a slide. It's not really Dramaesque, you see! (It does appear that Tanaka-san strongly wishes to die in some overdramatic way full of pathos.)

If I can't die like that, my next wish would be *'death from the final attack by an enemy boss while covering an ally that refused to become friends with me but trusts me from the bottom of his heart'*.

A proposal that has a fairly high difficulty level as far as setup, but I will try my best.

Next, I have an impromptu advertisement, I have made a PC game called Rewrite for the by now famous Key brand of game publisher Visual Arts.

I wrote the scenario.

I also got money (don't write this).

I wrote it in a team with the Columbus-tier writers Ryuukishi 07 and Tono Kawayuuto. It's still in development, but I can totally guarantee it's going to be quality.

The scenario is so ridiculously interesting I wonder if some god doesn't reside in..... if I wrote that to the end, I have a feeling that I would ascend to the next level as a writer (the stage that a narcissistic Final Boss eventually reaches), so I think I'll leave it at that.

The news has been announced by all the relevant magazines, but those who can connect to the Internet should please make sure to check out Key's website.

The foreword this time was altogether too wholesome, even I'm surprised. Ahhh, right, new developments for Jintai (the abbreviation used only by the author) might happen next year.

Look forwards to them.

**[Editorial department - notice] First edition December 2008. Partial revision January 2012.**

*This is an unofficial fan translation. Please support any official release.*